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Title of the extended essay: LEGITIMIZING JIHAD:  
HEZBOLLAH'S LEBANONIZATION  
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Criteria	Achievement level				
	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	2	2		2	
B introduction	2	2		2	
C investigation	4	4		4	
D knowledge and understanding	4	4		4	
E reasoned argument	3	4		4	
F analysis and evaluation	3	4		4	
G use of subject language	3	4		4	
H conclusion	2	2		2	
I formal presentation	4	4		4	
J abstract	2	2		2	
K holistic judgment	4	4		4	
Total out of 36	33				

**Legitimizing Jihad:  
Hezbollah's Lebanonization Process**

**May 2013  
Politics**

**3827**

## Abstract

To what extent did the Hezbollah truly Lebanonize between its birth as a militia, its evolution into a political party, and the collapse of the Security Zone in 2000? This essay focuses exclusively upon the rise of Hezbollah between its establishment in 1982 and the collapse of the Security Zone in 2000, the peak of its party's popularity. This essay observes Hezbollah's performance in national and municipal elections and explains its infitah policy and its jihad. The role of the militia's psychological warfare and social service network is also reviewed. Twelver Shiitism's place in Lebanon's consociational democracy is assessed as well. The Taif Accord, signed after the civil war, and Syria's 'free-hand' in Lebanon also contribute to the success of Hezbollah as a political party and as a war machine. This essay concludes that Hezbollah justified its jihadist activity and strove to gain legitimacy by entering Lebanese politics; however, it did not truly Lebanonize as a consequence. Public surveys, electoral polls, and primary documents were analyzed to counter Norton's argument. The works of leading Hezbollah experts were also considered. Harik, Alagha, Saad-Ghorayeb, and Hamzeh present different evidence to prove or disprove this theory.

Word Count: 193

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## Introduction

Formed in 1982 in response to the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon, Hezbollah was the second Shiite resistance movement to Amal with initial goals to expel the presence of Zionist and Western powers. The group's formal establishment was declared in an Open Letter addressed in 1985 to Christians and the World.<sup>1</sup> Their philosophy is based on the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and the teachings of its frontrunner, Ayatollah Khomeini. Hezbollah, 'Party of God' in Arabic, gained popularity through feelings of mutual hostility to Israel and the social services it provided for the impoverished Shiite population.<sup>2</sup>

Their political and military strength has grown substantially since their 17-year jihad for control of the Israeli-Lebanese border deemed the 'Blue-Line' by the United Nations. The militia was largely based in the Shiite-dominated regions of the country namely the Bekaa Valley, southern Lebanon, and southern Beirut, but today the militia has cells in North America and in Europe. Membership of this group exceeds 200,000 making it Lebanon's largest political party.<sup>3</sup> The group also has its own radio, website, and satellite-television station, Al Manar, and receives sanctions from Iran, Syria, and Hamas. Of the hundreds of Islamic grassroots movements that emerged in late twentieth century in the Arab World, Hezbollah undoubtedly has had the largest impact on foreign and domestic affairs.

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<sup>1</sup> Dominique Avon and Anais-Trissa Khatchadourian, *Hezbollah: A History of the Party of God* (Boston: President and Fellows of the Harvard College, 2007), 103.

<sup>2</sup> John Richard Thackrah, *Dictionary of Terrorism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), 137.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 74.

Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah is currently the public face of Hezbollah. The group has three wings –political, military, and social service. Most of the Arab World considers its political wing ‘a legitimate resistance movement,’ including Lebanon.<sup>4</sup> In practice, Hezbollah does not distinguish between its ‘wings.’ The United States enlisted the whole institution under its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations.<sup>5</sup> Prior to 9-11, Hezbollah killed more Americans in a single attack than any other existing terrorist organization. US deputy secretary of state, Richard L. Armitage stated in 2009 that “Hezbollah may be the A team of terrorists,” while “maybe al-Qaeda is actually the B team.”<sup>6</sup>

The ascent of this clandestine militia into the mainstream Lebanese political arena is explained in a theory called the Lebanonization of Hezbollah proposed by Augustus Richard Norton in the late 1990s. It argues that before Hezbollah assembled its ticket for the national elections, Hezbollah had modernized by eliminating Islamist goals from its platform and adopting an infitah policy.<sup>7</sup> The group ‘opened up’ to non-Shiites in a number of ways. For example, Hezbollah held meetings with religious and clan leaders to discuss national issues and to round support for the jihad. The group also sponsored Christian clubs and events to

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<sup>4</sup> Nour Samaha, “The ‘case’ against Hezbollah,” *Al Jazeera*, February 6, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/02/201222111849914483/> (accessed November 1, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Amal Ghorayeb, *Hizbullah: Politics and Religion* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 29.

<sup>6</sup> Kristian P. Alexander, “Book Review,” review of *Hezbollah: A Short History*, by Augustus Richard Norton, *Middle East Peace Council*, Fall 2007, Review, <http://mepc.org/create-content/book-review/hezbollah-short-history/> (accessed November 2, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Magnus Ranstorp, “The Strategy and Tactics of Hizbullah’s Current ‘Lebanonization Process,’” *Mediterranean Politics* 3 (1998): 109.



educate youth about their organization.<sup>8</sup> Nasrallah believed his policy created a more democratic and intellectual appeal to Lebanon.

The Lebanonization theory raises many questions, all of which culminate into the one that is the research question at hand: **to what extent did the Hezbollah truly Lebanonize between its birth as a militia, its evolution into a political party, and the collapse of the Security Zone in 2000?** In order to answer this question, one must explore others, such as why was Hezbollah not just a short-lived social movement? How does Hezbollah hold so much power in a country as heterogeneous as Lebanon? How did Hezbollah draw so many consensuses when it openly demoralized the government? Did Beirut promote Hezbollah's jihad activity? What contributed to Hezbollah's transformation from militia to mainstream? To what extent has Hezbollah become 'moderate'? This essay argues that Hezbollah remodeled its terrorist image to manifest itself as a member of government instead of modernizing. The militia ironically used democracy to legitimize its guerrilla warfare and its goal for a Lebanese Islamic State.

### Hezbollah's Inception and Islamic Agenda

Lebanon has been a consociational democracy since its independence from France. Parliamentary seats and ministry positions are each allocated to a particular confession and in Lebanon, confessions are strictly sectarian.<sup>9</sup> Since the 1943 National Pact, the president must be Maronite Christian, the prime minister Sunni

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 120.

<sup>9</sup> United States Institute of Peace, "Lebanon's Confessionalism: Problems and Prospects," *USIP*, <http://www.usip.org/publications/lebanons-confessionalism-problems-and-prospects> (accessed December 19, 2011).

Muslim, and the Speaker of the House Shiite Muslim.<sup>10</sup> In the parliament, a certain number of seats are guaranteed to each confession. The following is a list of the number of seats guaranteed to each confession in parliament under the Taif Accord: Maronite (34), Sunni (27), Shiite (27), Greek Orthodox (14), Greek Catholic (8), Druze (8), Armenian Orthodox (5), Alawite (2), Armenian Catholic (1), and Protestant (1).<sup>11</sup> Political parties therefore do not form based on similar platforms but rather sectarian commonalities or local and familial ties.

Hezbollah affiliates with Shiite Islam as its ideology is inspired by the success of the Revolutionary Guard in Iran. Their Open Letter, addressed to the Christians and the World, is the “working agenda defining and expressing the entity called Hezbollah” and “used as a point of entry into the Lebanese scene.”<sup>12</sup> The letter put forth the idea of jihad, a struggle against non-believers or oneself. The jihad’s fundamental objectives involve the demilitarization of Israeli, American, and French forces from Lebanon. The Party of God also sought to transform the country from a parliamentary democratic state to an Islamic Republic. In the letter’s address to Christians, Hezbollah’s ideological ambiguity becomes evident even in its primitive stages of development. It was an attempt by politicians to round support from other

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<sup>10</sup> Sandra Mackey, *A Mirror of the Arab World* (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 2008), 219.

<sup>11</sup>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples: Lebanon,” UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher.MRGI.LBN.4954ce52c.0.html> (accessed December 19, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> N. Qassem, *Hizbullah the Story from Within* (London: Saqi Radio Lebanon), 94.

confessions while still retaining its own support base.<sup>13</sup> Ideological ambiguity is paradox; however, Lebanon's political game demands in order to win the support of unassociated confessions.

### Twelver Shiitism

The Twelver Shiitism, adopted by Hezbollah was an emerging social movement under Sayyid Musa al-Sadr. The growing movement was radicalized into a jihad against Israel by the occurrence of four regional events: the success of the Iranian Revolution, the 1978 and 1982 Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon, the Lebanese civil war, and the identity crisis experienced by the underrepresented Shiites.

The Party of God was created because the leading Shiite group, Amal, refused to engage in jihad against Israel. Hezbollah's adherence to the jurist's absolute rule symbolizes its disregard for Lebanese authority. The group also adopted radical jihad and martyrdom practices to further manifest its submission to Ayotollah Khomeini. "Considering the inseparable nature of religion and politics in Islam, Hezbollah's political ideology should resemble its Islamic thinking."<sup>14</sup> In fact, Naim Qassem, Nasrallah's right-man, told Los Angeles Times, "The same leadership that directs the parliamentary and government work also leads jihad actions in the

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<sup>13</sup> James F. Rinehart, *Apocalyptic Faith and Political Violence: Prophets of Terror* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 106.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Elie Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizballahs Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program* (Leiden: ISIM, 2006), 127.

struggle against Israel.”<sup>15</sup> This statement encompasses Twelver Islam’s conviction that politics and religion are homologous.

### Taif Accord

Peace negotiations in Arab capitals could not be accomplished as Lebanon’s civil war reached an impasse in the late 1980s. A Middle East initiative, advocated by the United States, was the first successful attempt to stabilize Lebanon and was introduced in 1989. Assistant Secretary-General of the Arab League Lakhdar Ibrahim, Morocco’s King Hassan, Algeria’s President Chadli Ben Jadid, and Saudi Arabia’s King Fahd were among the representatives that mediated members of Lebanon’s 1972 parliament in signing the Taif Accord.<sup>16</sup>

Christian Parliamentarians signed the document, but disagreed with many elements of it. The accord called for equal representation of Christians and Muslims in the parliament to accommodate the demographic shift. Thus, the outdated 6:5 representation, in the Christians’ favor, was updated to a 1:1 representation. In addition, Lebanon’s new face was to be Arab, not Phoenician. While the Lebanese national army was being restored, the Assad government was to assist the Lebanese authorities in disarming the militias and stabilizing the country. In addition, 40,000 Syrian troops were to occupy two thirds of Lebanon to uphold security.<sup>17</sup> The

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<sup>15</sup> Borzou Daragahi, “Lebanon’s Hezbollah savors increasing legitimacy,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 2009, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/apr/13/world/fg-lebanon-hezbollah13> (accessed October 19, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (New York: IB Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2004), 44.

<sup>17</sup> Sandra M Saseen, “The Taif Accord and Lebanon’s Struggle to Regain Its Sovereignty,” *American University International Law* (1990): 63.

Lebanese Christians strongly opposed, but the Americans backed this 'peace mission' so that efforts could be focused on the Arab-Israeli conflict instead of the prolonged Lebanese Civil War. Syria's involvement ironically cultivated Hezbollah's strength and supported its jihad against Israel.

### Strength of Media Outlets: Hezbollah's Psychological Warfare

Hezbollah launched the Al-Manar Television Channel in 1991 in an effort to shed its western-proclaimed terrorist label and consequently strengthen its resistance and political image. Lebanese TV officials claim it is the third most popular station in the country, and rises to number one when conflict materializes in the south.<sup>18</sup> Despite laws against media receiving funding from foreign institutions, it is well known that Al-Manar is endorsed by Iran, contributing \$15 million yearly.<sup>19</sup> Between its news, talk shows, documentaries, music videos, and anti-Western propaganda, Al-Manar's main objective continues to be inspiring resistance. Indoctrination by media is a function of rounding up public support for Hezbollah.

Although the station puts on a moderate front, it airs graphic images of dead or wounded Palestinian bodies to win sympathy and videos of Israeli violence against refugees to center Arab anger on the 'Zionist entity.' Music videos are powerful tools implemented to "help people on the way to committing what you in

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<sup>18</sup> Avi Jorisch, "Al Manar: Hizbullah TV, 24/7," *The Middle East Quarterly* 6 (2004): 27. <http://www.meforum.org/583/al-manar-hizbullah-tv-24-7?iframe=true&width=100%&height=100%> (accessed November 12, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> James J. F. Forest, *Countering Terrorism and Insurgency in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: International Perspectives* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), 410.

the West call a suicide mission. It is meant to be the first step on the process of a freedom fighter operation," according to officials in the art and design department.<sup>20</sup> Hezbollah officials explained that the station largely "seeks to undermine the morale of the Israel Defense Forces" and accredits Israel's 2000 withdrawal from Lebanon partly with the success of this psychological warfare.<sup>21</sup> Because the effects of psychological warfare are non-violent and not immediately noticed, they are often overlooked. "Al-Manar is an operational weapon in the hands of one of the world's most dangerous terrorist organizations," announced a member of The Coalition Against Terrorist Media (CATM).<sup>22</sup>

#### Operation Accountability and Grapes of Wrath

Israel's 1982 invasion established anti-Zionist social movements like Hezbollah into powerful guerilla forces. By the 1990s, Hezbollah became the leading resistance against the Zionist sympathizers, which included the United States and France, besides the Israel Defense Forces and the Southern Lebanese Army (SLA). Hostilities persisted between Hezbollah and the Lebanese government as the Party of God continued to adhere to Iran and Syria. Since Beirut made no efforts to expel Hezbollah, Israel launched two military campaigns –Operation Accountability in 1993 and Operation Grapes of Wrath in 1996. Shimon Peres wanted to create a wedge between the Lebanese government and Hezbollah. He said that if the

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<sup>20</sup> Avi Jorisch, "Al Manar: Hizbullah TV, 24/7," *The Middle East Quarterly* 6 (2004): 27. <http://www.meforum.org/583/al-manar-hizbullah-tv-24-7?iframe=true&width=100%&height=100%> (accessed November 12, 2012).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> James J. F. Forest, *Countering Terrorism and Insurgency in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: International Perspectives* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), 413.

government did not cooperate with Israel, attacks would be launched against Lebanon outside of the Security Zone. When Hezbollah requested to organize demonstrations in Beirut, the city rejected its permit. The government wanted to put an end to the radical party and avoid war with Israel, but Syria did not allow Beirut to cooperate with Israel. Both of these attacks ironically awarded Damascus with more power as they mediated ceasefires and Israel failed to wedge the relationship between Hezbollah and the Lebanese government.<sup>23</sup> Peres was embarrassed. Syria administered new rules between Hezbollah and Beirut. These included the following: neither party had to coordinate actions against Israel, disputes between parties would be handled by Syria, and while Hezbollah engaged resistance in the Security Zone, Beirut was to secure the area north of it.<sup>24</sup> Mixed responses across the country were expressed. Government resurgence of hostility for Israel followed the death of 98 civilians at the UN base in Qana<sup>25</sup>.<sup>26</sup> The 16-day Operation Grapes of Wrath was broadcasted on Al-Manar. Hezbollah maintained its status as Lebanon's defender.

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<sup>23</sup> Augustus Richard Norton, "The Role of Hezbollah in Lebanese Domestic Politics," *International Spectator* (2007): 484.

<sup>24</sup> Thanassis Cambanis, *A Privilege To Die: Inside Hezbollah's Legions and Their Endless War Against Israel* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 43.

<sup>25</sup> Ellie Lieberman, *Reconceptualising Deterrence: Nudging Toward Rationality in Middle Eastern Rivalries* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 181.

<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that resistance martyrs commonly attacked Israeli air raids from civilian homes, schools, or hospitals to make the Israelis look malicious when they shelled Hezbollah fighters.

### Hezbollah's Financing and Social Service Network

The Koran presents da'wa as Allah's call to follow Islam. This implies conforming to Sharia and obeying the Ten Ancillaries of Faith, which is a Twelver extension to the Five Pillars of Islam. This idea has been modified over time as a consequence of the new relationship between politics and religion in the Middle East. Today, da'wa has become associated with groups that maintain networks of Islamic charities like the Muslim Brotherhood. Hezbollah gained this same reputation in Lebanon's Shiite communities.

The highly marginalized Shiite population comprised 30% of the population in the 1970s, but it should be noted that figure is estimated since Lebanon has not conducted a census since 1932. The majority of inhabitants in the Bekaa Valley, southern Lebanon, and southern Beirut lived in slums or rural communities where clean water was a luxury and feudal lords discouraged formal education. Hezbollah infiltrated these vulnerable areas with plans to indoctrinate its inhabitants after delivering social services in which the Lebanese government could not afford. The party was in fact the sole provider of health services to these Shiites.

Like Hamas, Hezbollah was an advocate for the poor created as a response to threats from Israel. Israeli PM Ehud Barak's comment in 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."<sup>27</sup> The movement enjoyed support from southern inhabitants.

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<sup>27</sup> Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 33.



According to Mohammed Raad, Member of Parliament, Hezbollah's main source of income is its investment portfolios and large donations from wealthy Shiites. The Party of God also receives remittances from expatriates in Africa and South America and donations from many of its western-banned front organizations. In its origins, Hezbollah was more dependent on Iran for endorsements; however, the Islamic Republic still contributes at least \$200 million yearly.<sup>28</sup>

### Syria Occupies Lebanon: Dissipating Power of the State

The dissipating power of the parliament meant inevitable misfortune for Christians. The Christian Lebanese Forces experienced many losses to leftist-Muslim militias during the war. They lost control of West Beirut. After surviving an assassination attempt, Maronite General Michel Aoun of the Lebanese Army, was expelled from the country by Syrian forces present in the country. Since Aoun openly opposed the Taif Accord, and being the last major pro-Christian commander, he had to be expelled. Dwindling Christian strength over the decades of the war allowed Syria and its allies to take over Lebanon and later orchestrate its elections. With Christians weak in Lebanon, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad could finally orchestrate Lebanon's post-war parliamentary election. The Syrian government's next step was to force prospective candidates to come to an agreement about coordinating Syrian and Lebanese foreign policy toward Israel. Part of this agreement involved both national armies to step aside as Hezbollah and the less

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<sup>28</sup> Jean K. Giraldo and Harold A. Trinkunas, *Terrorism Financing and State Responses: A Comparative Perspective* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 137.

powerful Amal fought Israel and the South Lebanon Army (SLA) to regain lost territory in the south.

### 1992 Parliamentary Election

Syria's dominance in Lebanon, accomplished by the Taif Accord, coupled with its military presence gave it a free hand in running Lebanon's post-war elections. It became implicit that any candidate, especially one seeking a top five position in parliament had to pledge allegiance to the Assad Government and fully agree to the Syrian-Lebanese joint foreign policy towards Israel.<sup>29</sup> Despite Christian boycott against the election, it continued without their participation. This decision upset the reputation of the Christian opposition as they chose not to contribute to rebuilding the country economically and politically after war. In many Christian districts, there was less than 10% of voter participation.<sup>30</sup> Syrian and Lebanese delegates on the basis of foreign policy and security signed a pro-Syrian pact called the Treaty of Brotherhood and Cooperation. It ensured Syria's absolute control over Lebanese military and communications, increasing their power.

Hezbollah built their political platform around Israeli resistance because it had to conceal its fundamentalist idea of an Islamic State in order to succeed in elections. The group used patriotism as a scheme to divert Lebanese fear to Israeli aggression, awarding Hezbollah the status of national defender. Hezbollah's infitah policy allowed it to round more support for its jihad and establish closer relations with non-Shiites, allowing them to win more seats in parliament. After the elections

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<sup>29</sup> Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 90.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 98.

they had to convince the Muslim leftists that they were still faithful to their fundamentalist values. They accomplished this again by ideological ambiguity.

Iran financially endorsed Hezbollah in a social service scheme in 1990 to wield votes from the poverty-stricken Shiites, a large demographic in Lebanon. Hezbollah's social service wing is partly the of root its popularity among the poor Shiite population. Since the early 1980s, Hezbollah has been mostly expending their service budgets given to it by Iran in healthcare, education, and agriculture. The following is a shortlist of social services adopted by Hezbollah: scholarships, interest-free loans, welfare services, environmental protection, physical rehabilitation, vocational training, local markets, support for the elderly, women's programs, youth programs, and delivery of drinking water.<sup>31</sup>

Success against the Israelis and SLA also stole votes from Amal. Nabih Berri, leader of the Amal movement, lost Shiite support with the emergence of Hezbollah. Berri's cooperation with the Maronites, his opposition to the presence of the PLO in the south, and his decision not to participate in the National Front all accounted for his decreasing popularity. Amal could not create anything concrete especially with their inconsistent views of the jihad.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, Hezbollah had a clear Islamic Agenda and received more recognition for fighting the Israelis. With logistical support from Iran, Hezbollah had the strength to fight off Amal and gain control of

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<sup>31</sup> Shaheen Sajan, "The Duality of Hezbollah: The Crossroads of Armed Struggle and Local Community Development" (MA diss., St. Mary's University, 2007), 83.

<sup>32</sup> Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (New York: IB Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2004), 51.

the South and its capital, Jabal Amel. The Shiite rivalry continued into the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

A poll conducted prior to the elections by a Lebanese newspaper indicated that of the 1,427 polled, 62 per cent answered affirmatively when asked if they would vote for a member of the resistance while 38 per cent did not.<sup>33</sup> Judith Harik, one of the world's foremost experts on Hezbollah, believes it is clear to interpret the results of the poll as a "public acknowledgement of the Party of God's contribution to the Lebanese 'cause' –reclamation of national territory."<sup>34</sup> In the same poll, only 19% checked yes for a militia to be elected.<sup>35</sup> This clearly indicated that the majority polled replaced the idea of Hezbollah as a militia with Hezbollah as a resistance. Hezbollah gained respect for its jihad, which became to be known as a nationalist struggle. Hezbollah had created a situation in which citizens either sided with the resistance or with Israel since the Christian opposition chose to stay out of the election. Supporting Hezbollah became a question of patriotism, which helped round votes from non-Shiites.

"Democratic process' legitimated the new political order Syria was orchestrating."<sup>36</sup> The Party of God won 12 of 128 seats in parliament, becoming the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>36</sup> Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (New York: IB Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2004), 46.

largest single bloc party. Hezbollah also went on to become the largest single bloc party in 1996 with 9 seats.<sup>37</sup>

### 1998 Municipal Election

A thirty-five year hiatus separated the municipal elections of 1963 and 1998. Traditionally, candidates in municipal elections were leaders of influential families like the al-Khansas, which had 1,100 members that were eligible voters.<sup>38</sup> Candidates did not openly associate with political parties, but were not always purely independent. Parties endorsed them. The Lebanese political game demanded it. When general elections went underway, these leaders were expected to secure votes for their patrons. In the bloc vote system, voters have as many votes as there are seats. The top candidates earn seats regardless their lists or political affiliations. When Hezbollah entered the municipal elections, Nasrallah wanted candidates to run under his own party's tickets. Hezbollah was able to attract clan leaders, including Sunnites, because of the success of its social service and military wings, but above all its infitah policy. Rival leaders like Nabih Berri and Rafik Hariri were threatened by this idea as it not only offset conventional rules, but it meant that 'independents' were attached to Hezbollah and were elected based on political affiliations and not platforms or skills. Nasrallah played the 'democracy card' in

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<sup>37</sup> Ahmad S. Moussalli, *Moderate and Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Quest for Modernity, Legitimacy, and the Islamic State* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1999), 25.

<sup>38</sup> Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born With A Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 113.

retaliation.<sup>39</sup> “Why should individuals of proven capacity and dedication step aside for alternative candidates who may have less or even no record of civic achievement at all...Wasn’t the aim to place the most qualified candidates in office regardless of their ideologies or personal political persuasions?”<sup>40</sup> Since Hezbollah was unstoppable, Hariri and Berri worked to compile their own lists too. The Party of God revolutionized the modern electoral campaign. Its community service efforts helped it win every seat in the Dahiyeh under its Ghobeiri and Bourj al-Barajneh tickets. It stole over one third of the seats in the south and Baalbek, and Amin al-Sharri, director of Hezbollah’s soccer team, won 42,884 votes in Beirut, crushing Amal.<sup>41</sup> These elections proved Hezbollah’s consensus on a local level and symbolized a threat to Amal’s long established following.

#### Withdrawal of the Security Zone

During Israel’s 1999 elections, Ehud Barak made a campaign promise that upon a year of his inauguration Israeli troops would withdraw from the Security Zone. After failing to reach conclusions with the Assad government, Barak prepared unilateral withdrawal for 24 May 2000. Nasrallah did not commit violence upon Israeli withdrawal, but did call for the tens of thousands of internally displaced persons to return home. Al-Manar TV overexposed the withdrawal, accrediting it to

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<sup>39</sup> Gary C. Gambill and Elie Abou Aoun, “How Syria Orchestrates Lebanon’s Elections,” *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 2, no. 7(2000), [http://www.meforum.org/meib/articles/0008\\_11.htm](http://www.meforum.org/meib/articles/0008_11.htm) (accessed December 19, 2012).

<sup>40</sup> Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (New York: IB Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2004), 98.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 101.

resistance efforts. The sheikh became a hero in the Shiite community, and Hezbollah reached the peak of its popularity.

### Conclusion

Hezbollah has been part of the Lebanese political scene since the early 1990's, as the voice of the marginalized Shiites and as the vanguard of the Israeli resistance. The group was able to Lebanonize because of the success of their infitah policy and their jihad. The 1992 elections helped to separate their terrorist status from their political status. That year Hezbollah claimed to have abandoned their Islamic State plan because it was anti-constitutional. The following year the group manipulated their image as extremists into nationalists during Operation Accountability and again in 1996 during Operation Grapes of Wrath. Psychological warfare aided this transformation. Supporting Hezbollah almost became a question of national pride. It was all part of the infitah scheme, which proved effective in the 1998 municipal elections as Hezbollah was successful in getting clan leaders to run under their ticket. The Taif Accord not only offered Muslims more power politically, but also allowed Hezbollah to remain armed. Hezbollah had more weapons than many European armies. After Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon, Hezbollah became one of the most influential terrorist groups in the Middle East. Nizar Hamzeh wrote, "Fadlallah's Lebanonization of Hezbollah has greatly undermined the position of extremists in the party."<sup>42</sup> Like Norton, Hamzeh believes the group has Lebanonized and thus become more moderate. This, as he further

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<sup>42</sup> Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 74.

argues, is only a front. The Party of God's leader is a sheikh who places the welfare of the Imam above the Lebanese government. According to Syria's rules administered after Operation Accountability, Hezbollah did not have to coordinate its actions against Israel with Beirut, highlighting the party's detachment from the government. In addition, Hezbollah purposefully built its electoral platforms on Arab hostility to Israel to divert attention from its anti-confessional goal of an Islamic State. Nationalism overwrote extremism in this case. The most blatant form of Hezbollah's indoctrination was Al-Manar TV bombarding the public with propaganda, especially in the event of an Israeli attack. Another source of popularity was Hezbollah's social services, which were essentially a scheme to rally votes by bribing disenfranchised Shiites. Hezbollah is technically part of Lebanese political order, but, as proven by this essay, while their actions may indicate Lebanonization, their goals have not modernized, they are terrorists, and they are a threat to regional stability as they continue to wage war with Israel. Because its obedience to Iran, Hezbollah's spiritual guide and patron, and Syria, Hezbollah's political ally, is prioritized over the Lebanese government, the Party of God failed to Lebanonize.



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