# HEZBOLLAH: ANALYSIS OF VIOLENCE

by Sarah Cohler

## Chapter 1

> *Hezbollah[1] is the voice of the Shi'ites. For a Lebanese group that is the least educated, the poorest, the most excluded and oppressed on a long-term basis, to see a leadership emerging that comes not from old Shi'ite elite families but rather from the mosques, from more populist level, to see that leadership acting by and large with prudence while still proving itself effective – it's really quite an impressive movement.* - Professor Richard Bulliet[2]

## 1.1. Brief Overview

What explains the chronological variation in Hezbollah's decision to use violence against Israel over time? Political scientists have theorized about why Hezbollah may use violence at a specific historical moment, but there has not been to my knowledge an in-depth study that seeks to explain what accounts for Hezbollah's decision to use or not to use violence against Israel over a ten-year period. Three predominant theories dominate analysts' discussion of root causes of particular wars between Hezbollah and Israel: direct Iranian influence, reaction to Israel's foreign policy, and Hezbollah's level of involvement in the Lebanese government. Therefore, I seek to evaluate the relative impact of the following influences: Iranian control, Israeli engagement in Gaza, Israel's decisions to assassinate Hezbollah leaders, and Hezbollah's involvement in the political

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. *Date*: Current revision December 15, 2010.

1. This particular transliteration, Hezbollah, will be used throughout this paper although there are many other common spellings such as Hizbullah, Hizballah, Hezballah, and Hisbollah.

2. Professor Richard Bulliet, *Interviewed by Sarah Cohler*, Held at Columbia University, History Professor, Columbia University, November 5, 2010.

system on Hezbollah's decision to engage in violence against Israel between 2000 and 2010. By analyzing the variation of these three influences, I seek to determine which factor most accurately explains Hezbollah's use of violence.

### 1.1.1. *Significance of Hezbollah*

Hezbollah is best described as a sub-state actor fighting a more powerful state adversary, and studying the variation in this group's violence illuminates not only case-specific causes of violence but also adds to the scholarship on the causes of guerrilla violence. Furthermore, identifying the source of asymmetric violence is the first step towards its eradication. Asymmetric violence or guerrilla warfare is the structural inverse of conventional warfare, which is acted out between large, organized, military forces in open battle on a linear front. Both World Wars and the Persian Gulf War of 1991 fall under the conventional warfare category. Distinct from conventional warfare, other types of prolonged military campaigns are unconventional, including sub-conventional and supra-conventional (nuclear) warfare. As a sub-state actor, Hezbollah commits acts of violence under the rubric of sub-conventional warfare.

Even those uninterested in this particular group will find an analysis of Hezbollah's violence a useful guide for understanding and predicting the actions of comparable guerrilla groups because the nature of guerrilla warfare demands that the militarily weaker, sub-state actor, whether located in Lebanon or Vietnam, uses secrecy, attrition strategies, and the high cost of counter-insurgency to their advantage. Underlying similarities in the structure and function of these groups makes the study of any one an inherently useful rubric to study any other. At a time when the United States and its allies are currently embroiled in campaigns opposing unconventional actors, investigating the causes of asymmetric violence would benefit any political scientist or policy maker interested in state security.

## 1.2. **Background**

An analysis of Hezbollah's violence is best understood in its geopolitical and historical context. Therefore, I highlight Hezbollah's goals and organizational structure, the structure of the Lebanese government, the Iranian institutions responsible for setting foreign policy and therefore the state's relationship to Hezbollah, and the history of Syria's influence.

### 1.2.1. *Hezbollah's Background*

Hezbollah (in Arabic, the "Party of God"[3]) was born out of the 1980s Lebanese Civil War, fighting other Lebanese militas and the Israeli invasion and subsequent occupation[4]. Shi'ite Muslims, Hezbollah's largest support base, account for 40% of Lebanon's total population, many of whom feel under-represented in the Lebanese political and economic system[5]. Headquartered in Beirut, Hezbollah controls Southern Lebanon, which represents about 10% of all Lebanese territory, where most Shi'a are concentrated[6].

History Professor Rashid Khalidi adds that there was no Hezbollah before the Israeli occupation. Hezbollah portrays itself as a resistance and social movement that speaks for the disenfranchised of Lebanon[7].

The group has maintained a military commitment to the expulsion of Israel from Lebanese territory, attracting "wide if non unanimous support" in Lebanon[8]. Hezbollah first entered the Lebanese government as a political party in 1992 and in 1996 outlined

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3. Emmanuel Karagiannis, "Hezbollah as a Social Movement Organization: A Framing Approach," *Mediterranean Politics* 14, no. 3 (2009): 365–383.

4. Krista E. Wiegand, "Reformation of a Terrorist group: Hezbollah as Lebanese Political Party," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 32, no. 8 (2009): pp. 670.

5. Ibid., pp. 670.

6. Agustus Richard Norton, "Hizballah of Lebanon: Extremist Ideals vs. Mundane Politics," *Council on Foreign Relations* (1999): pp. 3.

7. Professor Rashid Khalidi, *Interviewed by Sarah Cohler*, Held at Columbia University, History Professor, Columbia University, November 10, 2010.

8. Norton, "Hizballah of Lebanon," pp. 3.

its political manifesto, declaring its ambitions to include: the resisting of Israeli occupation on contested Lebanese land, reforming public education, safeguarding public freedoms, and instating a wide range of social and economic measures[9]. Social services that Hezbollah offers include "hospitals, medical centers, schools, orphanages, and rehabilitation centers for the handicapped"[10]. These welfare programs, while assisting the Shi'ite public, also benefit the resistance movement itself. They lend public support, legitimacy, and popularity to Hezbollah among the Shi'a, the primary recruiting pool for Hezbollah's armed militia[11], which remains under the jurisdiction of Hezbollah's Military or Jihad Council. In this context, the term *jihad* refers to warfare with spiritual significance[12]. According to a scholarly expert on the organization, Hezbollah "is first and foremost a Jihadist movement that uses political means, not a political party that pursues Jihad"[13].

Although the group remains tight-lipped about its organizational structure, researchers have discovered that it is structured as a hierarchical pyramid, headed by the decision-making Advisory Council (Majlis Shura al-Qarar)[15], over which Sheikh Hassan Sayyid Nasrallah has presided as the Secretary General since 1992[16]. The Advisory Council is comprised of nine members, including two Iranian representatives, whose presence implies not that the Iranian government leads the Council but that it is certainly influential. As is evident in Figure 1, underneath the Advisory Council are several subordinate

9. Martin Rudner, "Hizbullah: An Organizational and Operational Profile," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 23, no. 2 (2010): pp. 229.

10. Ibid., pp. 230.

11. Khalil Osman, "Hizbullah, party of God: an Islamic Movement Perspective," in, ed. Abdar Rahman Koya (Slough, United Kingdom: Crescent International, 2006), pp. 24.

12. *Jihad* is a complex term with several definitions. For an in-depth analysis of *jihad*, see: Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004)

13. Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), pp. 33.

14. Intelligence and Terrorist Information Center, Center for Special Studies, *Hezbollah: Profile of the Shiite Terrorist Organization of Global Reach Sponsored by Iran and Supported by Syria*, Special Information Bulletin (Intelligence and Terrorist Information Center, Center for Special Studies, 2003), `http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/hezbollah.htm`

15. In the literature, this Council body is sometimes referred to as the Shura Council, but I found this repetitive as Shura simply means "Council" in Arabic.
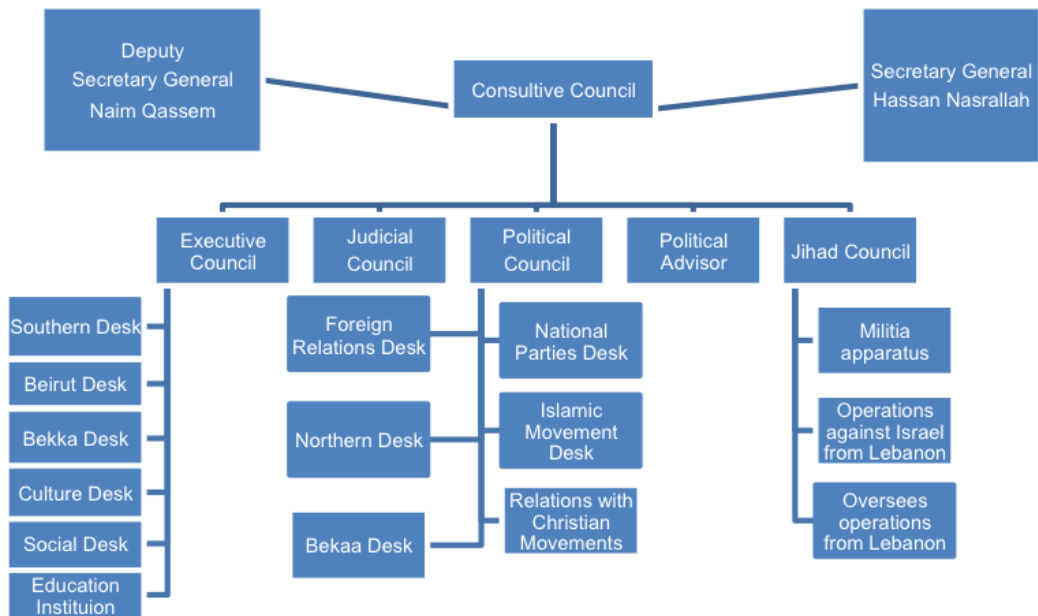
16. Rudner, "Hizbullah," pp. 227.

FIGURE 1. **Hezbollah's Organizational Structure.** Created with information gathered from an Israel Non-Governmental Organization focusing on intelligence and terrorism[14].

councils known as functional councils: the Executive Council, the Judicial Council, the Political Council, the Political Advisor, and the Jihad/Miltary Council. Each functional council is in charge of several operational "desks" each responsible for specific topics[17]. Nasrallah confirms that Hezbollah has four organizational levels, the top levels being more visible to the public, and the last level represented by the *mujahidin*, or guerrilla fighters[18].

### 1.2.2. *The Lebanese Government*

Lebanon has a weak central government, which is rare in the Middle East. Every four years, Lebanese vote on members of parliament[19]. Since the Taëf Agreement in

17. Intelligence and Terrorist Information Center, Center for Special Studies, *Hezbollah: Profile of the Shiite Terrorist Organization*.

18. Nasrallah Hassan, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah* (London: Verso, 2007), pp. 398-399.

19. Agustus Richard Norton, "The Role of Hezbollah in Lebanese Domestic Politics," *The International Spectator* 42, no. 4 (2007): pp. 480.

1989, which marked the end of the Lebanese Civil War, parliamentary seats must be divided equally between Christians and Muslims. The seats are further subdivided along sectarian lines, and voters cast their ballots for every available seat, regardless of sect. Therefore, candidates must appeal to constituents across sectarian lines[20].

There are two main political coalitions in Lebanon: the first is a coalition of mainly Sunnis, Druze, and Christians that formed after 2005 called the March 14 Group, named in honor of the protest on March 14th, 2005 when one million demonstrators called for an investigation into the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri — suspected at the time of having been ordered by the Syrian government[21].

The second coalition is known as the March 8 group in commemoration of the large demonstration organized by Hezbollah and Amal to thank Syria for its role in maintaining peace in the country. In the 1980s and early 1990s, Amal competed with Hezbollah for Southern Lebanese support for geurrilla campaigns; however, Amal disarmed in 1992 and is now Hezbollah's political ally in the government. The March 8 group is comprised predominantly of the southern Lebanese Shi'a represented by Hezbollah and Amal as well as "large elements" of the Christian community[22]. Before the 1992 elections when Hezbollah established itself as a political party, Hezbollah's leadership made strategic decisions to run as a coalition alongside Sunnis and Christians in some Lebanese districts to allow for political maneuvering and compromises with all factions that live in the region[23]. For example, in Hezbollah's first election, the group captured eight seats in addition to two seats won by loyal Sunni representatives and two seats won by Christian

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20. Norton, "The Role of Hezbollah in Lebanese Domestic Politics," pp. 480.
21. Ibid., pp. 485.
22. Ibid., pp. 486.
23. Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, "Hizbullah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation," *Third World Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1993): pp. 331.

representatives with whom Hezbollah had bargained[24]. Khalidi notes that the groups co-alesced as the result of coalition politics, but the marriage of convenience has remained solid and stable[25].

### 1.2.3. *An Iranian Profile*

After the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, there emerged two dominant political factions: the reformists, who promote rapprochement with the United States and suspended uranium enrichment, and the "hardliners" or conservatives, who advocate the exportation of Islamic revolutions and increased conflict with the United States and Israel. Both camps are antagonistic towards the American and Israeli military but take different approaches to counter that potential threat[26].
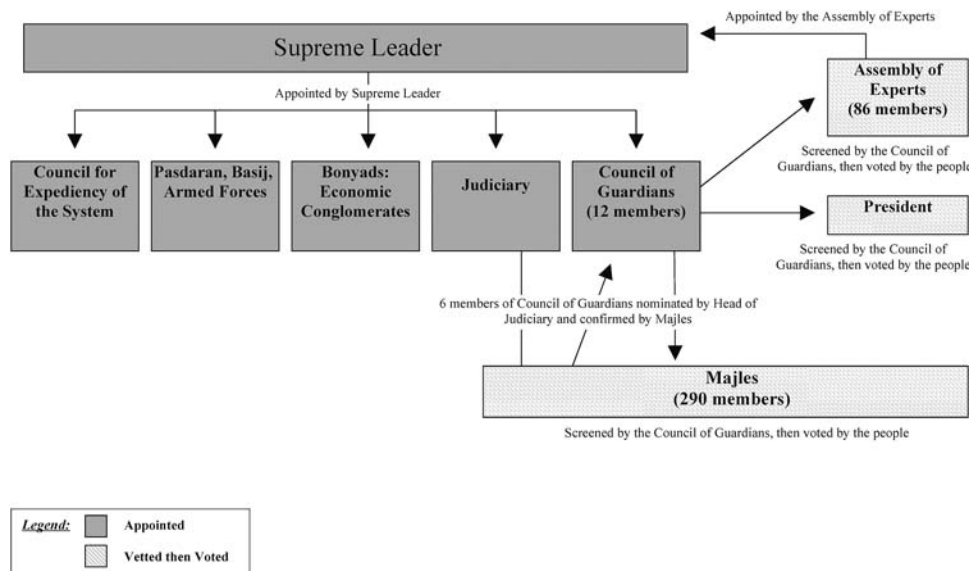


FIGURE 2. **Organizational chart of the Islamic Republic of Iran** [27].

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24. Ibid., pp. 329-330.
25. Khalidi, *Interviewed by Sarah Cohler*.
26. Masoud Kazemzadeh, "Ahmadinejad's Foreign Policy," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 27, no. 2 (2007): pp. 426-428.
27. ibid., pp. 425

Iran, despite the US media's current obsession with its President, is not a one-man dictatorship. In fact, Iran is better described as an "oligarchy of Shi'ite fundamentalist clerics and laypersons who operate within a complex system"[28]. No one person controls it. Instead, Iran is governed by a system of clerics and non-religious elites. As outlined in Figure 2, the Iranian Constitution gave executive, legislative, and judicial powers to the highest ranking Shiite cleric known as the Ayatollah but did not bestow unchecked power to him either, since the Constitution also created an elected president, an elected parliament known as the Majlis, and an elected Assembly of Experts. Although Supreme Leader Khamenei is the most powerful official, he could be overruled if the majority of the oligarchs wished[29]. This government is really a *regime*, an entire system of elites. A change in any one of these structures — that is if a shift occurred in any of these governing bodies from one political faction to the other — might lead to a change in the articulation of Iranian foreign policy.

For example, the reformist school of thought dominated Iranian local councils in 1999, became a majority in the Majlis in 2000, and re-elected reformist President Khatami in 2001. The conservatives, however, maintained control over the non-elected offices during this time; these institutions include the Council of Guardians, the Council of Experts, and the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, who succeeded Ayatollah Khomeini, installed after the Islamic Revolution[30]. Khatami's policy of seeking dialogue and improved ties with the West gave way to increased tension with neighbors and the international community due to growing conservative power[31].

28. Kazemzadeh, "Ahmadinejad's Foreign Policy," pp. 424.
29. Ibid., pp. 425.
30. David Menashri, "Iran's Regional Policy: Between Radicalism and Pragmatism," *Journal of International Affairs* 60, no. 2 (2007): pp. 153.
31. Ibid., pp. 153-6.

Political Science Professor Eva P. Rakel reiterates that "Iranian foreign policy is linked to the policy preferences of the Iranian ruling political elite"[32], so it is imperative to investigate the interests – sometimes duelling interests – of the different factions of the Iranian government. This is especially important for foreign policy since the reformists and conservatives have different interpretations of how best to reify a stable goal of protecting Iranian interests and thwarting Western influence in the region. This is important to keep in mind because it is Iran's foreign policy that governs that relationship.

### 1.2.4. *Syrian Involvement*

Although often overlooked, Syria is one of Hezbollah's "strongest backers"[33].

Syrian troops were invited into Lebanon in 1976 to help the state deal with the increasing number of Palestinian refugees and increased turmoil caused by the PLO[34]. The Syrian military took that opportunity to reassert its dominance and occupied the state, even controlling the rules of election process[35].

Syrian president Hafez al-Assad supported Hezbollah since its creation in the 1980s, providing a weapons supply route and logistical support[36]. When al-Assad died in 2000, his son, Bashar, took his father's role as president, and enhanced Hezbollah's political status and power not only by receiving Hezbollah leaders warmly but by supplying the

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32. Eva Patricia Rakel, "Iranian Foreign Policy since the Iranian Islamic Revolution: 1979-2006," *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 6, nos. 1-3 (2007): pp. 187.
33. CBS, "U.S. Cables: Iran Armed Hezbollah Via Ambulances," *CBS: News* (November 29, 2010), http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/11/29/world/main7099393.shtml.
34. Patrick Vibert, "Hariri's Assassination Five Years On," *Foreign Policy Blogs* (February 12, 2010), http://lebanon.foreignpolicyblogs.com/2010/02/12/hariris-assassination-five-years-on/.
35. Mona Yacoubian, "Lebanon's Parliamentary Elections," *United States Institute for Peace* (June 2009), http://www.usip.org/publications/the-issues-lebanon.
36. David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 38.

group with increasingly sophisticated weaponry[37]. By 2003, Syria considered Hezbollah "a full-fledged strategic ally backed by the Syrian president, who maintains close relations with its leader, Hassan Nasrallah"[38].

Syria used its political power in Lebanon "to support and give political cover to Hezbollah, ... and directed Lebanon's state security apparatus to support logistically the arming of Hezbollah"[39]. Before leaving Lebanon in 2005, Syria guaranteed Hezbollah's freedom of operation and prevented the Lebanese government from flexing its authority to disarm Hezbollah in accordance with UN Resolution 425[40]. Before 2005, Syria was instrumental in assisting Hezbollah maintain its powerful status within Lebanon, and one NGO even argued that Hezbollah would not have been able to reach its present status without Syria[41].

As Syrian troops left Lebanon, Damascus lost political leverage; Hezbollah remains Syria's tool to pressure the Lebanese government so it will not appoint anti-Syrian officials to important posts[42]. Today, Syria maintains a close relationship with Hezbollah, continuing to deliver weapons[43]. However, Syria does not have the influence in Lebanese politics or with Hezbollah that it once enjoyed in the 1980s and 1990s[44].

## 1.3. The Literature

Previous studies of the causes of asymmetric violence offer competing theories that may explain Hezbollah's strategy of applied violence. In the sections following, I summarize

37. Robert G. Rabil, "Has Hezbollah's Rise Come at Syria's Expense?" *Middle East Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (2007): 43–51.

38. Intelligence and Terrorist Information Center, Center for Special Studies, *Hezbollah: Profile of the Shiite Terrorist Organization*.

39. Rabil, "Has Hezbollah's Rise Come at Syria's Expense?"

40. Intelligence and Terrorist Information Center, Center for Special Studies, *Hezbollah: Profile of the Shiite Terrorist Organization*.

41. Ibid.

42. Rabil, "Has Hezbollah's Rise Come at Syria's Expense?"

43. CBS, "Syria Giving Missiles to Hezbollah, Israel Says," *CBS: News* (April 14, 2010), http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/04/14/world/main6397011.shtml.

44. Rabil, "Has Hezbollah's Rise Come at Syria's Expense?"

these theories, some of which are mutually incompatible, and in Chapter 3 I provide a detailed comparative analysis identifying which of these is likely to be the dominant explanation of the groups behavior.

### 1.3.1. *Asymmetric violence*

As discussed above (1.1.1), Hezbollah is a Lebanese example of a sub-state group employing asymmetric violence against a state with more military power. Terrorism is a kind of asymmetric violence, but Hezbollah has not strictly speaking committed acts of terrorism against Israel in the last decade despite the group's reputation. Nonetheless, theories explaining terrorist violence are useful in an analysis of Hezbollah. While the theorists below in sections 1.3.1.3 and 1.3.1.2 speak predominantly of terrorism, their theories are useful tools to understand asymmetric violence more generally since it is not necessary for the victims to be non-combatants for the following analyses to retain their salience.

1.3.1.1. *Not quite terrorism.* The United States has designated Hezbollah as a terrorist group[45] due to their terrorist activities against the United States in the 1980s, which have taken more American lives than have subsequent strikes against Israel[46]. However, I classify Hezbollah not as a terrorist group but as a sub-state actor occasionally engaged in asymmetric warfare: Hezbollah has changed over time; in its earlier incarnation, Hezbollah certainly could be classified as a terrorist group because they were committing acts of terror against the United States. However, since the group joined the Lebanese government in 1992, their violence changed, and in the last ten years, Hezbollah has not committed terrorist acts against either the United States or Israel. While Israel has been targeted, only Israeli active military, not non-combatants, were victims. As described below, a hallmark of terrorism is its selection of non-combatant

45. U.S. Department of State, "Foreign Terrorist Organizations," *Terrorism Designations* (2010), http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm.
46. Bulliet, *Interviewed by Sarah Cohler*.

targets; therefore, Hezbollah does not qualify – at least in the last decade – as a terrorist group.

Charles Tilly, who notes the difficulty of defining terrorism, uses the term to mean the intentional use of violence for political ends by non-state actors against civilians[47]. The United States Department of Defense defines terrorism as "the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological"[48]. Different definitions reflect the idiosyncratic priorities of the individual or group that uses a particular reflection of terrorism[49]. There have been countless authors who have tried to pinpoint a precise definition of terrorism, and while I will not re-create the debate here, in general terms, terrorism is the act of committing asymmetric violence or the threat of violence against non-combatants by a non-state actor designed to create a political effect.

While Hezbollah is labelled a terrorist organization by the US Government for bombing the American Marine barracks and embassy, it is important to distinguish between early Hezbollah, which certainly employed the terrorist tactic, and present-day Hezbollah, which cannot shake its terrorist label.

1.3.1.2. *Rationality of violence.* Martha Crenshaw championed the rationalist model of terrorism that argues that terrorists are rational actors seeking particular political ends. Rationality refers here not to the laymen's use of the term, but instead to denote an actor who is goal-oriented, is able to rank preferences, and calculates relative costs and benefits of various actions. Crenshaw argues that terrorists act to maximize the return of their preferences, arguing against those who stipulate that terrorism is the unintended

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47. Charles Tilly, "Terror, Terrorism, Terrorists," *Sociological Theory* 32, no. 1 (2004): 5–13.
48. Department of Defence, *Department of Defence Military and Associated Terms*, As amended through April 2010 (Department of Defence, April 2001).
49. Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

outcome of psychological or social factors[50]. Instead, Crenshaw asserts, terrorism is a political strategy willingly undertaken by rational actors who have analysed the costs and benefits of violent means to achieve political ends[51]. Crenshaw's theory, too, is a useful paradigm for a broader spectrum of asymmetric violence than terrorism alone, although this is the type of which she speaks.

Two theories of Hezbollah's violence considered below assume Crenshaw's rationalist model. Investigating the impact of both Israel's actions and Hezbollah's political participation on the group's calculus surmises the group's ability to make strategic calculations.

1.3.1.3. *Terrorism as costly signaling.* Political science professors Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter offer a complementary theory to Crenshaw's, building on the rationalist model. They postulate that terrorist violence is a form of costly signaling, actions that are so costly that liars and bluffers are unwilling to bear the cost[52]. Kydd and Walter outline five logics of costly signaling, but only two apply to Hezbollah: attrition and outbidding. One employs an attrition strategy in order to convince the enemy that one is powerful enough to impose considerable costs if the enemy does not yield to one's demands. The more violence one is able to exact, the greater the threat of future violence, and the more likely the adversary is to concede. For example, Israel withdrew from South Lebanon in 2000 because the costs of occupying the land proved too costly[53].

The outbidding logic seeks to demonstrate that one group can better protect its constituents from an existential threat than can rivals[54]. Outbidding occurs when two or more domestic parties compete for leadership, and the general population is uncertain

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50. See: Max Abrahms, "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy," *International Security* 32, no. 4 (2008): 78–105

51. Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (1981): 379–399.

52. Andrew Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security* 32, no. 1 (2006): 49–79.

53. Ibid., pp. 61.

54. Ibid., pp. 50.

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about which group represents their interests[55]. Another author, Mia Bloom, defines out-
bidding as the use of violence to win over a constituency and away from the opposition
that is cooperating with the enemy. She writes, "outbidding will result as groups try to
dinstinguish themselves from one another to establish or increase a domestic constituent
base"[56]. While outbidding is generally directed towards the domestic audience, she also
notes that outbidding attempts to undercut the international opponent as well as do-
mestic rivals[57]. Bloom's and Kydd and Walter's theories of attrition and outbidding are
useful ways to think not only about terrorism but asymmetric violence as well since
neither the logic of attrition nor outbidding requires civilian victims to retain salience.

### 1.3.2. *Hezbollah's violence*

1.3.2.1. *Iran giving the orders.* The influence of Iranian directives on Hezbollah's decision-
making process must be considered because Iran is Hezbollah's largest donor[58]. Often,
to find influence, one "must follow the money trail," so to speak, and Hezbollah's single
largest benefactor is the Iranian government.

Some argue Hezbollah takes directives from Iran by pointing to Iran's monetary sup-
port that financed Hezbollah's inception. Hezbollah was not only inspired by the 1979
Shi'ite revolution in Iran but was established in the 1980s with Iranian funds[59]. However,
there is no evidence that at the outset Iran, like Syria to a lesser extent, was anything
more than Hezbollah's co-sponsor[60]. Hezbollah is more analogous to a small business
owner seeking venture capital than a child being told what to do. Professor Bulliet
argues that although Iran is often referred to as "exporting" the Islamic Revolution, it

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55. Kydd and Walter, "Strategies of Terrorism," pp. 76.
56. Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 95.
57. Ibid., pp. 96.
58. For information on Hezbollah's resource mechanisms, see: Rudner, "Hizbullah," pp. 232.
59. Agustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 34.
60. Ibid., pp. 34.

would be more accurate to describe groups like Hezbollah *importing* the Islamic Revolution. "To portray it as an export," he explains, "is to ascribe more agency to the Iranians than they had". Bulliet warns against crediting Iran as the founders of the series of groups like Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad that were self-styled in the image of the Islamic Revolution. While these groups may fashion themselves as part of an Iranian-led unity, they are no more unified than the disparate groups of various Al-Qaeda branches that have no relation to each other beyond the desire to each call themselves Al-Qaeda or the series of monarchical revolutions in 19th century Europe inspired by the 1789 French Revolution in which the French had no hand[61]. Iran merely assisted Hezbollah in its own creation.

It is universally acknowledged that Iran has continued to financially support the Lebanese group[62], so one need not look at Hezbollah's entire history when the last decade will sufficiently take this financial connection into account. For more information about Hezbollah's origins, consult the texts of Krista Weigand[63], analyst Jon Alterman[64], Political Science Professor Ahmad Hamzeh[65], and Professor of international relations and anthropology Agustus Norton[66].

More important than the relationship between Iran and Hezbollah in the 1980s is that their relationship remains a close one still today. Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem himself notes their natural bond due to their shared support of Islamic principles and goal of fighting Israel[67]. Iran continues to send about $100 million a year[68] and train

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61. Bulliet, *Interviewed by Sarah Cohler*.
62. Wiegand, "Reformation of a Terrorist group."
63. Ibid.
64. Jon B. Alterman, "Iran's Strategic Aspirations and the Future of the Middle East: Statement before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia," *Center for Strategic International Studies* (2008).
65. Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*.
66. Norton, *Hezbollah*.
67. Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah*, trans. Dalia Khalil (London: Saqi, 2005).
68. 60-Minutes, "Hezbollah: A-Team of Terrorists," *CBS News* (April 2003).

and equip Hezbollah fighters[69]. Furthermore, as mentioned in Section 1.2.1, Hezbollah's Advisory Council, comprised of nine members, includes two Iranian representatives.

Many point to Iranian monetary support as evidence of collusion; however, money alone does not establish that one actor controls the actions of another. For example, the fact that the United States gives $3 billion to Israel annually[70] does not automatically lead one to conclude that the United States is in control of Israeli politics. Monetary support is insufficient to conclude that Hezbollah is Iran's proxy.

Different analysts have widely varying opinions about Iran's influence on Hezbollah's decisions to instigate violence against Israel. Weigad, for example, writes that Iran has been "directly involved" with Hezbollah's strategies and uses Hezbollah as a proxy in order to assert itself in the region[71]. The analysts behind the Middle East Briefing take a more nuanced perspective, postulating that critical decisions such as Hezbollah's decision to enter in the 1992 Lebanese parliamentary elections were likely verified by Iran's supreme leader; however, while in theory Khamenei may have the last word, he has never overruled a decision made by the Advisory Council, Hezbollah's governing body, suggesting that Khamenei's position in the hierarchy is such to provide legitimacy to the Council's decisions[72].

According to analyst Jon Alterman at the Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS) think tank, Iran's goal in Lebanon is one of influence rather than direct control[73]. Professor Norton remarks that while Hezbollah's 1985 manifesto or Open Letter bore a strong made-in-Tehran stamp, Iran's support for Hezbollah since the 1980s has wavered, particularly in terms of use of violence[74]. Norton argues that only amidst revolutionary

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69. Wiegand, "Reformation of a Terrorist group."
70. Alisa Odenheimer and David Rosenberg, "Annual U.S. Aid to Israel To Reach $3B," *New York Sun* (July 30, 2007).
71. Wiegand, "Reformation of a Terrorist group," pp. 671.
72. Middle East Briefing, "Hizbollah: Rebel Without A Cause?" *International Crisis Group* (July 2003): pp. 4.
73. Alterman, "Iran's Strategic Aspirations."
74. Norton, "Hizballah of Lebanon," pp. 18.

fervor could Hezbollah count on unconditional Iranian support[75], which strongly implies that Hezbollah is not an Iranian puppet.

Nassrallah insists that monetary donations from Iran are accepted without political conditions[76]. He explains in an interview that donations "will not be subject to any conditions ... That is categorical and definite. I and my brothers do not take money, arms, or support with conditions attached from anyone"[77]. An Iranian journalist and documentary filmmaker has studied the leaders of Iran and Hezbollah and notes that Hezbollah is no Iranian puppet. He writes in the *New York Times*, "Hezbollah is an indigenous Lebanese armed resistance group that owes its popularity to Israeli atrocities, biased American policies and corrupt Lebanese politicians. When the United States and Israel try to portray Hezbollah as an Iranian proxy, they are pointing the finger in the wrong direction"[78].

The lack of consensus on Iran's role in Hezbollah's decision making has encouraged me to examine its influence relative to Israeli foreign policy and Hezbollah's presence in the Lebanese political system. Professor Bulliet suggests that the formal structure of Hezbollah is that Iran is not in control but admits that a secret bond cannot be disproven by the very nature of any potential bond being secret. He notes that this kind of argument can be made on two bases: the first is based on power but is purely suppositious. Iran is the stronger actor and therefore must be in control. However, the same argument could be made of the United States and Israel; the United States, the more powerful of the two, is by this logic in control of Israeli politics. However, this is very unlikely to be the case, as Israel has defied the United States in the past. Therefore, simply being a powerful donor seems not to suggest that one state controls the actions of a less powerful beneficiary. Bulliet suggests that people also make the

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75. Ibid., pp. 32.
76. Hassan, *Voice of Hezbollah*, pp. 406-7.
77. Ibid., pp.407.
78. Maziar Bahari, "Sweating Out the Truth in Iran," op-ed page, *The New York Times* (August 24, 2006), `http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/24/opinion/24bahari.html`.

argument for Iran being in control of Hezbollah ideologically. They may want it to be true, but they cannot make the argument based on verifiable evidence, he explains[79].

In order to ascertain the true nature of the Iranian-Hezbollah connection, it is necessary to investigate the ways in which Iran benefits from this relationship. Professor Anoushiravan Ehteshami argues that Iran is concerned about Washington's intentions, fearing after Sadaam, it could be the target of the next American military strike[80]. The function of Iran's relationship with Hezbollah, according to Alterman and Bulliet, is to alleviate these fears. According to Alterman at CSIS, Hezbollah gives Iran a stick with which it can threaten Israel and the United States[81]. Professor Bulliet agrees that were the United States to threaten Iran because of its nuclear weapons program, Iran could encourage Hezbollah to attack Israel, which would greatly frustrate the American government. Iran does not want to see Hezbollah take over Lebanon, Bulliet explains, but "what can Iran do to the United States if it sees us as an enemy? The answer is nothing." Iran can make the Iraqi occupation difficult, but calling American officials bad names doesn't excite them. Since the hostage crisis, Iran has been depicted very negatively in the American imagination. However, if Iran "pokes Israel's eye, the United States has a heart attack." It is much more acceptable to the US government to be anti-American than anti-Israeli[82]. Therefore, Iran benefits from the relationship by having a weapon against the United States.

Furthermore, there are not many government or even quasi-government agencies who express admiration for Iran. Without Hezbollah, Iran would be surrounded by hostility. Bulliet argues that Iran has no intrinsic ties to its Arab neighbors, and, in fact, its natural allies such as China lie eastward. However, Iran derives "a sense of well-being

79. Bulliet, *Interviewed by Sarah Cohler*.

80. Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Iran's foreign policy: from Khatami to Ahmadinejad," in, ed. Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri (United Kingdom: Ithica Press, 2008), pp. 136.

81. Alterman, "Iran's Strategic Aspirations," pp. 5.

82. Bulliet, *Interviewed by Sarah Cohler*.

from having people who like it." Bulliet argues that the Hezbollah-Iran relationship only makes sense under this rubric. Hezbollah admires Iran, so Iran loves Hezbollah[83].

1.3.2.2. *Israeli foreign policy.* It is important to examine the influence of Israeli actions on Hezbollah's decision making process since Hezbollah itself declares Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty as its *raison d'être*[84].

Recall there are two strategies this paper investigates Hezbollah employing in relation to Israel's actions: 1) that Hezbollah utilizes a tit-for-tat or retaliatory strategy and 2) that Hezbollah takes Israeli embroilment in Gaza as a cue to strike. Crenshaw reminds us of the frequency of what she calls the "action-reaction syndrome" in which the use of military force to reach a political end is met with reactionary violence thereby fueling a cycle of violence. She points to historical examples of this action-reaction system including the protestant violence in 1969 that drove the provisional IRA to retaliate[85]. Crenshaw's action-reaction syndrome is the theoretical foundation of Hezbollah's employment of a tit-for-tat strategy.

Crenshaw also explains why Hezbollah might use Israeli fighting in Gaza as a cue to strike. Historically, she points out, resistance groups facing a colonial power have often exploited moments during which that power was weakened by a foreign war. For example, the IRA took advantage of Britain's temporary weakness after World War I[86]. Hezbollah would be merely replicating a successful military strategy. The question remains whether these concepts as applied to Hezbollah and Israel are at the forefront of Hezbollah's decision-making process.

1.3.2.3. *Presence in the Lebanese government.* Hezbollah is recognized as a legitimate political party within Lebanon and throughout the Arab world[87]. Hezbollah first joined

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83. Ibid.
84. Lara Deeb, "Hizballah: A Primer," *Middle East Report Online* (2006), http://www.merip.org/mero/mero073106.html.
85. Wiegand, "Reformation of a Terrorist group," pp. 385.
86. Ibid., pp. 388.
87. Ibid., pp. 669-670.

the Lebanese government in 1992, but its involvement has fluctuated over time, with notable increases in influence in 2005 and 2008.

Scholars have pointed to Hezbollah's emergence on the political scene as the cause of their decision to refrain from violent tactics within Lebanon itself. Hezbollah is not alone: other groups such as the IRA and PLO have renounced violence once they became political parties. To become a political party, Hezbollah agreed not to use violence in order to achieve domestic goals[88]. Norell indicates that Hezbollah's primary domestic goal is to decrease tension and increase its influence in the region by emphasizing its economic and social structure initiatives over violence. In lieu of violence, Hezbollah has used non-violent methods to cope with partisan issues in the Lebanese government[89]. Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem also admitted that Hezbollah made concessions in exchange for recognition as a political party[90]. The group even tempered their goals for an Islamic state in Lebanon[91], to which the majority of Lebanese are opposed.

While Hezbollah may have ceased organized demonstrations of violence against Lebanese since 1992 (with one exception in May 2008 after peaceful means of negotiation bore no fruit), their violent incursions against Israel did not. In fact, International Relations Professor Oren Barak argues that violence against Israel shores up Hezbollah's domestic power. On June 29, 2006, the gathering of key governmental factions known as the "national dialogue" in Lebanon was supposed to meet to discuss whether Hezbollah should continue to bear weapons, but this congress was moved to July 25. Hezbollah did not wait for its political power to be tested, however, and as a direct result of this threat to Hezbollah's power, Barak argues, several members of Hezbollah crossed into Israel, attacked an Israeli military patrol, and kidnapped two soldiers, which then led

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88. Wiegand, "Reformation of a Terrorist group," pp. 671.
89. Magnus Norell, "A Victory for Islamism? The Second Lebanese War and Its Repercussions," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (November 2009): pp. 37.
90. Qassem, *Hizbullah*, pp. 190.
91. Ibid., pp. 187-191.

to the ensuing 34-Day War[92]. Islamic Studies Professor Joseph Alagha agrees that the kidnapping that led to the 34-Day War was, at least in part, caused by Hezbollah seeking more legitimacy in politics[93]. Violence legitimises their political party because it is Israeli defeat that endears constituents towards Hezbollah. Recall the process of outbidding, which Kydd and Walter define as the "use of violence to convince the public that the terrorists have greater resolve to fight the enemy than rival groups, and therefore are worthy of support"[94]. Hezbollah is outbidding the Lebanese Army, which does not run against Hezbollah as a political party but receives US funding[95]. Hezbollah's pro-Western political adversaries in the March 14th Alliance do not claim to use violence themselves in defense of the country but implicitly support the Lebanese Army due to shared Western biases.

Considering Hezbollah's political engagement may illuminate the benefits the group derives from using violence against Israel. Crenshaw agrees that asymmetric violence is useful in affecting public attitudes. According to her theory, perpetrators of violence may aim to create sympathy in a constituency by instilling fear in a foreign audience[96]. Crenshaw's theory is useful when considering Hezbollah since their resistance against Israel endears it to the Lebanese public[97]. The popularity of Hezbollah's political platform, as well, is based not only on their dedication to Islamist ideals and to the poor but also their resistance to Israeli incursion of Lebanese sovereignty[98]. The more entrenched Hezbollah becomes in the government, the more incentive the group has to gain popular support so that they can continue to be elected and gain more seats in Parliament.

92. Oren Barak, "Ambiguity and Conflict in Israeli-Lebanese Relations," *Israel Studies* 15, no. 3 (2010): pp. 178.

93. Joseph Alagha, "The Israeli-Hizbullah 34-Day War: Causes and Consequences," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (2008): pp. 2.

94. Kydd and Walter, "Strategies of Terrorism," pp. 51.

95. Aram Nerguizian, "The Lebanese Armed Forces: Challenges and Opportunities in Post-Syria Lebanon," *Center for Strategic International Studies* (2000): pp. 57.

96. Crenshaw, "Causes of Terrorism," pp. 387.

97. Imad Mansour, "Washington and Hezbollah: A Rare Convergence of Interests," *Middle East Policy* 17, no. 2 (2010): 84–104.

98. Deeb, "Hizballah: A Primer."

Maintaining a strong presence in the Parliament is important for Hezbollah to prevent the government from trying to pass a law to disarm Hezbollah's military wing, which it contemplated doing in 2006. One might expect, then, since Hezbollah's popularity is directly proportional to attacks against Israel, that an increase in its involvement to protect its interests, and therefore an increased willingness to give the people what they want, would result in an increase in the number of attacks against Israel.

Another way in which the Lebanese political system may affect Hezbollah's decision to use violence is illuminated by a mathematical model developed at the University of Maryland. According to their statistical findings on Hezbollah's behavior (as analysed between 2000 and 2004), the most substantial factor that determines whether Hezbollah will commit transnational attacks is whether Hezbollah has candidates holding office, and it is not an election year. The authors who developed the paradigm suggest this kind of aggression may be the result of a kind of "rally around the flag effect" in which Hezbollah tries to shore up personal power by focusing antagonism against the external enemy. They postulate that attacks do not occur during election years with the same statistical probability because when Hezbollah did attack Israel during an election year (1996), the rocket campaign provoked harsh Israeli bombardment of Southern Lebanon, killing and destroying the homes of Hezbollah's key constituents[99].

## 1.4. Methodology

I investigate Hezbollah's use of violence against Israel during the 34-Day War in 2006 and the periods of peace between 2000 and 2006 as well as between 2006 and 2010. For each case, I decide which factor most accurately describes Hezbollah's decision to use or withhold violence against Israel.

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99. Aaron Mannes et al., "Stochastic Opponent Modeling Agents: A Case Study with Hezbollah," in *International Conference on Social and Behavioral Processing, Springer Verlag Lectures Notes in Computer Science* (2008), pp. 6-7.

### 1.4.1. *Studying the Iranianian factor*

There are two competing and mutually exclusive theories about the nature of Iranian interests and its foreign policy, and each implies a different relationship with Hezbollah. One view of Iran places great significance on the leadership. If the Iranian government were controlling Hezbollah, the leaders themselves and the views they espouse should matter. This perspective would predict a low level of Hezbollah's violence when the reformists, who promote rapprochement with the West, were dominant in the Iranian government and higher levels of violence when the hardliners, who advocate increased conflict with the West, dominated Iranian politics.

The opposing perspective argues that Iranian foreign policy is constant regardless of the individuals in power. According to this rubric, Hezbollah's relationship to Iran is constant and the concept of direct control becomes nebulous. What concerns Iran is military actions against it, so Iran would therefore not ever want to induce violence that could be traced back to it for fear of retaliation. Iran would benefit from Hezbollah's violence toward Israel only if the US threatens Iran directly. Since the US has not taken military action against Iran, this perspective cannot predict direct control of Iran over Hezbollah.

To ascertain which view of Iran is more accurate, I investigated published reports and analysts' best interpretations of the Iranian elite. By understanding the influence of the reformists and hardliners on policy formation, Iran's relationship with Hezbollah becomes apparent.

### 1.4.2. *Studying Israeli actions*

If Israeli actions were the most important factor affecting Hezbollah's behavior, one would expect to see a change in Israeli action associated with a closely-timed shift in Hezbollah's violence. For example, the tit-for-tat strategy stipulates that Israeli violence against Hezbollah would result in a closely timed retaliation. The opportunist theory

suggests that when Israel is preoccupied with fighting in Gaza, Hezbollah will strike. One might also expect that Hezbollah leaders publically announce that Hezbollah is responding to Israeli actions. According to the opportunist strategy, one would expect that when Israel is not engaged in a war with Gaza, Hezbollah will not strike. Similarly, if Israel does not initiate violence against Hezbollah, then the tit-for-tat strategy would stipulate that Hezbollah refrain from attacking Israel.

### 1.4.3. *Studying Lebanese politics*

Although Aaron Mannes et al. revealed in their mathematical model that Hezbollah was more likely to commit violence in an off-election year, this model was based on data collected only over the span of four years, and more importantly, it is neither predictive nor offers a logic that explains why violence occurs at this time[100]. Therefore, I look to other methods to determine the affect that involvement in the Lebanese government has had on Hezbollah's decisions to engage in violence.

If Hezbollah's involvement in politics were the main factor influencing its decision to engage in or withhold from violence against Israel, then Hezbollah's actions would reflect the will of the people – the force required to win elections – or institutional changes that shift the political balance of power.

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100. Mannes et al., "Stochastic Opponent Modeling Agents."

## Chapter 2

> *Iran has increased its clout, making it practically impossible to ignore Iranian wishes when formulating regional policies.* – Magnus Norell[101]

## 2.1. **The Real Iran**

To determine the relationship between Iran and Hezbollah, competing theories of the true nature of Iran must be assessed. Each conception of Iran, henceforth known as "Iran A" or "Iran B," implies a different relationship with Hezbollah.

### 2.1.1. *Iran A*

According to this perspective, a shift in Iranian leadership from reformist to conservative ideology would result in a change in Hezbollah's actions.

2.1.1.1. *Implications of reformist policy.* The Iranian reformists' strategy was one of promoting dialogue with the west, especially Israel and the United States[102]. Therefore, antagonizing the West would not be furthering the reformists' view of Iranian interests. It would be wrong to overly simplify the reformists as being partial to the United States, however; both the reformists and conservatives fear American power, but the reformists' channeled that fear to less antagonizing ends[103]. In the eight years that preceded Ahmadinejad's presidency, Reformist President Muhammad Khatami's foreign policy was driven by improving Iran's relations with the rest of the world through a policy of détente and mutual respect[104]. Therefore, a strong reformist government would predict peace.

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101. Norell, "A Victory for Islamism?" pp. x.

102. Menashri, "Iran's Regional Policy: Between Radicalism and Pragmatism," pp. 153.

103. Kazemzadeh, "Ahmadinejad's Foreign Policy," pp. 426.

104. Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran's foreign policy: from Khatami to Ahmadinejad* (United Kingdom: Ithica Press, 2008), pp. xiv.

2.1.1.2. *Implications of conservative policy.* Part of the conservative strategy is to divert attention away from Iran's domestic issues and economic woes by directing attention towards an external enemy[105]. Moving away from the policy of dialogue, conservatives insisted on "forceful and action-oriented politics"[106]. Under President Ahmadinejad, confrontation is the norm[107]. Kayhan Barzegar argues that a conservative Iran seeks an "offensive defense," defense through military engagement, hoping to warn states about the consequences of working with Israel or the United States[108]. Furthermore, Barzegar argues, in a conservative regime, Iran's fear is directly proportional to its attempts to expand its regional influence[109]. Therefore, instigating a proxy war against Israel would accomplish conservative goals.

The Iran A perspective predicts that when the reformists are in control of Iranian politics, Hezbollah refrains from using violence; when the conservatives hold the power, Hezbollah attacks.

## 2.1.2. *Iran B*

This perspective asserts that Iranian foreign policy is constant regardless of the individuals in power. According to this model, the conservatives' rhetoric of antagonism is mere posturing and is not indicative of an aggressive foreign policy – merely indicative of domestic politics. Iran's chief concern is potential military incursions against it, so Iran would therefore not ever want to induce violence that could be traced back to it for fear of retaliation.

Iran gains an ally in Hezbollah, not a proxy, and at a moment in which the international community increasingly mistrusts Iran, the state is happy to have as many allies

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105. Menashri, "Iran's Regional Policy: Between Radicalism and Pragmatism."
106. Ali M. Ansari, *Iran under Ahmadinejad: The Politics of Confrontation* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2007), pp. 22.
107. Ibid., pp. 51.
108. Kayhan Barzegar, "Iran's Foreign Policy Strategy after Saddam," *The Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (January 2010): pp. 180.
109. Ibid., pp. 182.

as possible. To Iran, Hezbollah is analogous to Venezuela. There is neither an inherent link between Iran and Venezuela nor Iran and Hezbollah, but once these actors declared admiration for Iran, the state reflexively nurtured that relationship. There is little risk involved in Iran's relationship with Hezbollah: giving weapons to the group keeps the Iranian arms industry up-to-date. Iran wants to have a viable arms industry whether engaged in a war or not, and arming Hezbollah with rockets maintains the economical viability of that goal. Furthermore, through Iran's relationship with Hezbollah, the state gains a stick with which it can poke Israel — and by extension the United States — with little risk of Hezbollah ever pulling Iran into a war itself[110].

The only instance in which Iran would benefit from Hezbollah acting violently against Israel is if the United States threatened a military incursion on Iranian soil, which has not yet happened and is unlikely to happen in the near future. If Israel threatened Iran, the same calculus would exist, and Iran would benefit from a Hezbollah-led attack. This perspective would account for moments of peace and would only predict violence after a military threat. Speaking of Iranian control when Hezbollah is left to its own devices for a majority of the time — given the infrequency of threats against Iran — then becomes meaningless.

### 2.1.3. Historical Analysis

The key question to answer is whether a change in the leadership in the Iranian government correlates with a change in Hezbollah's actions. Important moments to investigate are the years in which Iran had a strong reformist or strong conservative government. Years in which neither reformist nor conservative leaders had a clear majority are excluded from this analysis, since resulting policy can not easily be attributed to either party.

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110. Bulliet, *Interviewed by Sarah Cohler*.

Hezbollah can be argued to follow Iranian leadership if the group refrains from enacting violence during strong reformist moments and increases attacks during a strong conservative leadership. Only if for a majority of the last decade, Hezbollah follows the Iranian leadership can we use Iran A as our Iranian model, the influence of which will be investigated alongside Israeli actions and Lebanese politics, below, in Chapter 3. Otherwise, we must use Iran B as our model.

2.1.3.1. *Strong Reformist Iran.* The Iran A model predicts low levels of violence associated with a strong reformist government in Iran. In 2000 and 2001, the reformists had control of the Majlis, local councils, and the presidency[111]. During this time, Iran refrained from attacking the West, in line with the leaders' rhetoric. Hezbollah attacked Israel in October of 2000, which does not fit within the Iran A paradigm, but otherwise the group remained peaceful.

2.1.3.2. *Strong Conservative Iran.* By late 2005, all elected and unelected positions in the Iranian government were conservative[112]. This strong conservative government continues through 2010, and yet for a majority of time, Hezbollah remains peaceful. The group engaged in violence against Israel only once during this period and Iran never does. As pressure builds against Iran — a state that is viewed by the international community as increasingly rogue — the state, reason dictates, would feel more threatened. According to the Iran A paradigm, an increasingly threatened Iran would be more proactive. However, this is not the case.

2.1.3.3. *Conclusions about Iran.* The evidence does not support the Iran A model. Iran does not engage in violence regardless of its leaders rhetoric, and Hezbollah engages in violence more often during strong reformist regimes than during strong conservative ones. Therefore, the Iranian leadership is a poor predictor of Hezbollah's activity, which is more adequately explained by the Iran B paradigm. Therefore, when speaking

111. Menashri, "Iran's Regional Policy: Between Radicalism and Pragmatism."
112. Ibid.

of Iran's relationship to Hezbollah, what is important is influence rather than direct control.

**Chapter 3**

> *Hezbollah oscillates between revolutionary passion and calls for calm and moderation* –Mats Wärn[113]

## 3.1. **Cases of Hezbollah's Violence**

Following the survey of Hezbollah's history and geopolitical context, it should now be possible to investigate the causes of Hezbollah's violence and peace. Three concrete measures compare competing theories of Iranian influence, Israeli actions, and Lebanese politics: Iranian influence is said to be responsible for violence if Iran is threatened; Israeli actions are responsible if Israel has recently invaded Gaza or killed a member of Hezbollah; Lebanese politics is responsible if Hezbollah acts with its Lebanese constituents in mind.

### 3.1.1. *2000-2006 Peace*

Between 2000 and 2006, there was a relatively low level of violence along the Southern Lebanese border, during which Hezbollah refrained from attack. Iran could arguably be responsible for this peace since the United States did not threaten to invade Iran during this time. Israeli embroilment in Gaza could arguably be responsible as well. Hamas declared a "temporary truce" in Gaza, calling on its supporters to cease incursions into Israel[114]. Therefore, a sub-state actor looking to assist an ideological ally would likely refrain from violence during this time. However, Hamas only called this truce in 2004, leaving the peace between 2000-2004 unaccounted for. Lebanese politics could also be potentially responsible. According to this theory, Hezbollah is chiefly interested in

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113. Mats Wärn, "Israel and Hizbollah: An Asymmetric Conflict in Historical and Comparative Perspective," in, ed. Clive Jones and Sergio Catignani (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 124.
114. Nur Masalha, *The Bible and Zionism: Invented Traditions, Archaeology and Post-Colonialism in Israel-Palestine* (London: Zed Books, 2007), pp. 229.

placating the Lebanese, and after a strenuous and violent civil war, civilians were tired of fighting[115]. Since people wanted peace, Hezbollah gave them peace.

Given these alternatives, the best explanation for peace in this period seems to be Hezbollah's involvement in the Lebanese political system. Iran is peripherally responsible, perhaps, but only indirectly. This is analogous to crediting a parent for his child not breaking a window even if the parent did not forbid the child from doing so. In a sense, Iran is responsible, but without direction, the decision is Hezbollah's alone, and therefore an alternative cause is more likely to be at the forefront of their thinking. Fighting in Gaza also seems a poor explanation since it does not account for the full period of peace. Tit-for-tat explanations also fall short, as Israel engaged in daily provocation including abducting civilians from their homes "in addition to the usual air, sea, and ground violations," but Hezbollah did not respond to these incursions of sovereignty with violence[116]. Lebanese politics not only explains the entire period of peace but is also a logical explanation for this interval.

### 3.1.2. *2006 Violence*

On July 12, 2006, Hezbollah's cross-border abduction of Israeli soldiers triggered the 34-Day War, also known as the Second Lebanese War[117]. Consequently, "Israel imposed an air, land, and sea blockade almost completely severing the country from the outside world for approximately eight weeks," during which Lebanon's infrastructure and economy were destroyed[118]. As a result of the conflict, 130,000 houses in Lebanon sustained partial or complete damage as did all of the runways in Beirut Rafiq Hariri International Airport and six strategic highway sections[119]. In sum, Lebanon accrued over $15 billion

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115. Norton, *Hezbollah*, pp. 115.
116. Hassan, *Voice of Hezbollah*, 381.
117. Daniel Sobelman, "Israel and Hizbollah: An Asymmetric Conflict in Historical and Comparative Perspective," in, ed. Clive Jones and Sergio Catignani (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 49.
118. Alagha, "Israeli-Hizbullah 34-Day War," pp. 2-3.
119. Ibid., pp. 15.

in damage and lost revenues[120]. The war resulted in more than one million Lebanese displaced, more than 1,200 dead — one third of whom were children under the age of 12 — and more than 4,000 wounded or handicapped[121]. According to official Israeli figures, 120 Israeli soldiers died as did 39 Israeli civilians[122]. More than one year later, a man in Haifa succumbed to the wounds he sustained during the war, bringing the total number of civilian deaths to 40[123].

There was no evidence that Israel would react the way that it did, given its history of restrained responses to previous Hezbollah kidnappings[124]. Nasrallah was not expecting Israel's reaction because he did not take into account a change in Israeli leadership that occurred at the beginning of that year[125]. Hezbollah was expecting the limited response they received in 2000 for a similar kidnapping that resulted in a prisoner swap in 2004 in exchange for the bodies of the kidnapped Israeli soldiers. However, the new Israeli Prime Minister and Defense Minister did not have security experience and were particularly inexperienced in Israeli-Lebanese relations[126]. Nasrallah admitted that if he had known the scale of the Israeli retaliation, he would not have commissioned the kidnapping of the two Israeli soldiers[127].

Despite Nasrallah's regret and extensive damage to Lebanon, Hezbollah won the 34-Day War politically. Israel and its sympathizers admitted strategic defeat. The contemporaneous Israeli Prime Minister's popularity rating sank below 40% among Isralies[128]. Former CIA analyst Kenneth Pollack noted that "Hezbollah did what no

120. Alagha, "Israeli-Hizbullah 34-Day War," pp. 3.
121. The Daily Star, "Timeline of the July War 2006," *The Daily Star* (2010), `http://www.dailystar.com.lb/July_War06.asp`.
122. Steven Erlanger, "Israeli Admits Big Errors in Lebanon War, but Won't Resign," *The New York Times* (January 3, 2007).
123. Jack Khoury, "Haifa man dies of critical wounds sustained during Lebanon war," *Haaretz* (August 30, 2007), `http://www.dailystar.com.lb/July_War06.asp`.
124. Norell, "A Victory for Islamism?" pp. 27.
125. Barak, "Ambiguity and Conflict in Israeli-Lebanese Relations," pp.179.
126. Ibid., pp.179.
127. Alagha, "Israeli-Hizbullah 34-Day War," pp. 3.
128. Reese Erlich, *The Iran Agenda: The Real Story of U.S. Policy and the Middle East Crisis* (Sausalito, CA: PoliPointPress, 2007), pp. 49.

Arab government ever has: They fought Israel and didnt lose"[129]. The bar was set too high for Israel to win. Israel's goal of securing the two prisoners bowed to discourse of defeating Hezbollah. Therefore, Hezbollah had only to survive the bombardment to claim victory, since Israel defined an Israeli victory by the eradication of Hezbollah[130]. Despite being out-gunned and losing militarily, Hezbollah won politically because Israel was unable to annihilate them, which boosted Hezbollah's popularity even among Sunni countries[131].

It would not make sense to argue that Iran is responsible for Hezbollah's use of violence in July 2006 since neither the United States nor anyone else threatened Iran with military action at this juncture. Instead, Norell argues, it was Israeli embroilment in Gaza that provided Hezbollah with an opportunity it couldn't refuse[132]. He argues that the disturbances in Gaza were "undoubtedly an important factor" in Hezbollah's calculus[133]. Norell's argument makes chronological sense: in June 2006, Israel sent troops into Gaza. In early July, Hezbollah planned a "well-timed" raid from Lebanon into northern Israel[134]. Barak agrees that the timing of fighting in Gaza played an important role in Hezbollah's decision making[135]. Although the two groups are discretely different entities, Hezbollah supports Hamas rhetorically and in 2006 supported them with weapons[136]. According to an interview with a senior member of Hezbollah in September 2006, "Hezbollah tries to support Hamas is any way it can"[137]. Nasrallah insists that the kidnapping took four or five months to plan[138], and the Israeli Defense Force (IDF)

129. Neil King Jr., "War Emboldens Iran Ahead of Nuclear Talks," *Wall Street Journal* (August 16, 2006).

130. Deeb, "Hizballah: A Primer."

131. Mohsen M. Milani, "Tehran's Take: Understanding Iran's US Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (2009).

132. Norell, "A Victory for Islamism?" pp. 11.

133. Ibid., pp. 13.

134. Erlich, *The Iran Agenda*, pp. 45.

135. Barak, "Ambiguity and Conflict in Israeli-Lebanese Relations," pp. 164.

136. Michael Hirst and Clancy Chassay, "'Hezbollah is arming Gaza for a new war on Israel', says Israel's spy chief," *The Telegraph* (September 3, 2006), `http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1527931/Hezbollah-is-arming-Gaza-for-a-new-war-on-Israel-says-Israels-spy-chief.html`.

137. Ibid.

138. Hassan, *Voice of Hezbollah*, pp. 391.

independently believes that Hezbollah meticulously planned the kidnapping over several months[139]. Nasrallah confirms that after the group planned the attack, they waited for the opportune moment[140], and the most fitting chronological explanation is the Israeli invasion of Gaza.

It could also be the case, however, that it was Lebanese politics that influenced Hezbollah's decision to kidnap two Israeli soldiers. On June 29, 2006, the gathering of key governmental factions known as the "national dialogue" in Lebanon was supposed to meet to discuss whether Hezbollah should continue to bear weapons, but this congress was moved to July 25. One political scientist argues that Hezbollah did not wait for its political power to be tested, however, and that the 34-Day-War was a direct result of Hezbollah's attempt to shore up domestic power through the use of violence against Israel[141]. Islamic Studies Professor Joseph Alagha agrees that the kidnapping that led to the 34-Day War was, at least in part, caused by Hezbollah seeking more legitimacy in politics[142].

Given these hypotheses, it makes the most sense that the Hezbollah's actions were a combination of taking advantage of the situation in Gaza and political considerations. Nasrallah's statements indicate that Hezbollah was planning an attack long before IDF invaded Gaza. What encouraged these plans were likely the result of political factors. After Syrian troops left Lebanon in 2005, Hezbollah had to stand on its own two feet while justifying its arms cache. However, if the Gazan invasion was not a factor, Hezbollah likely wouldn't have dealt with the logistical hassle involved with smuggling weapons into Gaza through Egypt[143]. The assault on Gaza allowed Hezbollah to continue to claim its role as defender of Lebanon, fighter of colonialism, to boost their domestic standing. It is therefore important to keep in mind the role of both the Israeli attack on Gaza and

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139. Amos Harel, *34 Days* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 11.
140. Hassan, *Voice of Hezbollah*, pp. 391.
141. Barak, "Ambiguity and Conflict in Israeli-Lebanese Relations," pp. 178.
142. Alagha, "Israeli-Hizbullah 34-Day War," pp. 2.
143. Hirst and Chassay, "Hezbollah is arming Gaza."

Hezbollah's political calculations when discussing the 2006 kidnapping that accidentally sparked a 34-day war.

### 3.1.3. *2006-2010 Peace*

Between 2000 and 2006, Hezbollah refrained from attacking Israel. Iran could be responsible for this peace since the United States did not threaten to invade Iran during this time. Israeli embroilment in Gaza, on the other hand, is a poor measure since the IDF pressed into Gaza in late 2008 and continued attacking through early 2009, but Hezbollah offered nothing but rhetorical support. Fighting resumed in 2010, and Hezbollah continued to offer only nominal gestures of solidarity[144]. Lebanese politics is a more reliable predictor. By refraining from violence, Hezbollah protected its constituency from retaliatory bombing such as they were subject in 2006. Israel has announced that any attack would be more lethal than their devastating campaign in 2006[145]. Nasrallah apologized for the kidnapping that sparked the 34-Day War and stated that he would not have supported the action if he had known the Israeli response, so it would make sense that the group refrained from future attack when they expected a greater reaction.

Given these alternatives, Lebanese politics is the best explanation for Hezbollah's restraint. As discussed above (3.1.1), Iran is peripherally responsible but cannot be the sole explanation. The fact that Israel invaded Gaza and Hezbollah did not engage in violence indicates that fighting in Gaza is no longer a useful measure. Political considerations explains Hezbollah's decisions: Deterred by Israeli threats, Hezbollah acts prudently to preserve the lives and livelihood of their constituents.

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144. BBC, "Israeli air strikes hit two Gaza towns," *BBC: News* (November 19, 2010), `http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11795966`.

145. Reuters, "Israel warns Hezbollah war would invite destruction," *Reuters* (October 3, 2008), `http://www.reuters.com/article/idUKTRE4923I020081003`.

**Chapter 4**

> *In the long run —after Israel eventually returns the Palestinian land to Lebanon and Syria and resolves the Palestinian issue— Hezbollah must still function as a political party in Lebanon.* – Reese Erlich[146]

## 4.1. Analysis of Hezbollah's Israeli Attacks

It would appear that, according to the cases of violence and peace discussed in Chapter 3, since 2000, Hezbollah has been a group chiefly concerned with Lebanese politics. The standard state of affairs is one of peace during which Hezbollah seeks to appease the Lebanese public. From 2000 to 2006, the Lebanese public was tired of fighting. The Lebanese Civil War had raged on from 1975 to 1990, and the Israeli occupation had only ended in early 2000 — although Israel continued to violate Lebanese air space[147]. As a result, Hezbollah refrained from attacking Israel.

The new political environment created in 2005 when Syria left Lebanon was the permissive cause that led to the planning of the 2006 kidnapping that sparked the 34-Day War; however, I would be remiss in concluding that Israel's incursion into Gaza was not an important chronological factor. Similarly, Professor Bulliet concludes that Hezbollah's leadership has been very prudent and has not shown any inclination to use hostility towards Israel as anything but an excuse to retain its weaponry and increase its standing in the Lebanese political system. Concurrently, taking advantage of Israel's embroilment in Gaza "obviously occurred to them once [in 2006]"[148].

Hezbollah's appraisal of the kidnapping that sparked the 34-Day War was that it was a poor decision, and so they are unlikely to militarily support Hamas again. This theory is supported by the fact that when Israel pushed into Gaza in 2008, 2009 and 2010, Hezbollah offered nothing but rhetorical support, fearing an Israeli retaliation. In

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146. Erlich, *The Iran Agenda*, pp. 44-5.
147. Norton, *Hezbollah*, pp. 92.
148. Bulliet, *Interviewed by Sarah Cohler*.

fact, Hezbollah has not attacked Israel since 2006 most likely out of considerations for the lives and livelihoods of those in Lebanon who would be bombed during a retaliatory strike. The one consistent thread throughout Hezbollah's decision-making process is Lebanese politics.

## 4.2. Understanding Hezbollah's Other Attacks

While it is clear that Hezbollah's motivations to attack Israel are driven by political considerations, the question remains whether their attacks against Lebanese can be explained by their involvement in politics. There have been two major incidents of violence inside Lebanon during the last decade, which is puzzling, since domestic attacks abruptly ceased in 1992 after Hezbollah joined the Lebanese parliament.

4.2.0.1. *2005 Violence.* Although Hezbollah categorically denies involvement[149], the group has been implicated in the assassination of an anti-Syrian and therefore anti-Hezbollah Lebanese leader[150]. A CBC investigation revealed that "evidence gathered by Lebanese police and, much later, the UN, points overwhelmingly to the fact that the assassins were from Hezbollah"[151]. On February 14, 2005, Former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was assassinated along with 22 others by a car bomb. Although designed to silence the anti-Syrian leader, Hariri's death was the catalyst for the withdrawal of Syrian troops, which were invited into Lebanon in 1976[152]. Syria and Hezbollah's political power alike were threatened by Hariri's anti-Syrian stance.

149. Al-Jazeera, "Nasrallah unveils 'Hariri proof'," *Al-Jazeera English* (August 10, 2010), `http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2010/08/2010891991920480.html`.

150. Colum Lynch, "Evidence links Hezbollah to Hariri death," *The Washington Post* (November 21, 2010), `http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/21/AR2010112103987.html?hpid=topnews`.

151. Neil Macdonald, "CBC Investigation: Who killed Lebanon's Rafik Hariri?" *CBC News* (November 21, 2010), `http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2010/11/19/f-rfa-macdonald-lebanon-hariri.html`.

152. Vibert, "Hariri's Assassination Five Years On."

4.2.0.2. *2008 Violence.* In May 2008, Hezbollah used political violence as leverage to compel the government to concede to its demands[153]. After 18-month sit-in protests in downtown Beirut and a six-day armed takeover of capital, Hezbollah successfully negotiated considerable concessions with majority governmental coalition[154].

Sixty-five people died when Hezbollah took over the capitol from May 9 - 14. As a result of Qatar's mediation, Hezbollah's minority coalition gained veto power in the Lebanese parliament, ensuring their ability to veto any future bills concerning the disarmament of Hezbollah, which further increased the group's power in the government[155]. In exchange, Hezbollah agreed not to use violence again to solve domestic political problems[156].

4.2.0.3. *Domestic Violence Conclusions.* Both instances of domestic violence occurred when Hezbollah's political power was threatened. Hezbollah's analysis that triggers violence or peace against Israel is triggered by political considerations; domestic violence appears to be triggered by a more specific political calculus. Decisions to commit domestic violence does not take the proverbial will of the people into account as Hezbollah did between 2000 and 2006 when refraining from attacking Israel. Since the people wanted peace, assassinating Hariri in 2005 was anathema to that desire, which is likely why the group denied responsibility, even accusing Israel. Instead, violence within Lebanon appears to be motivated by fear of losing political power.

Hariri was perceived as threatening Hezbollah's pro-Syrian coalition. Damascus believed that Hariri was responsible for fueling the anti-Syrian fervor through his impressive connections. "Hariri was popular with the Bush administration, French President Jacques Chirac, and the Saudi Royal family. To the Syrians, it appeared that Hariri was mobilizing these connections against them, and they were furious"[157]. Hezbollah and

153. Wiegand, "Reformation of a Terrorist group," pp. 667.
154. Ibid., pp. 669.
155. Ibid., pp. 677.
156. Ibid., pp. 677.
157. Vibert, "Hariri's Assassination Five Years On."

Syria had every reason to believe that a quieted Hariri would alleviate pressure from Syria, keeping a Syrian presence in Lebanon, ensuring Hezbollah's continued political success.

Concern for political power is certainly the driving force behind the 2008 violence as well. It is clear from the negotiations process that Hezbollah's chief concern is amassing more power in the government. This makes sense considering that the government had recently made two moves that threatened Hezbollah: it removed a manager at the airport sympathetic to Hezbollah and investigated Hezbollah's private communications network[158]. Furthermore, the constant possibility that the government would attempt to disarm Hezbollah, as it considered in 2006, loomed above the group's head. The threat of disarmament coupled with the two events prior to May 2008 explains not only the timing of the protests but why Hezbollah specifically wanted the power to veto legislation.

Future domestic violence continues to be a theoretical possibility as long as Hezbollah maintains its weapons cache. However, as long as Hezbollah's role in the government is not threatened, according to this analysis, there is no reason for the group to turn their guns against Lebanese. To preserve peace, Hezbollah's new place in government should be welcomed and encouraged.

## 4.3. Policy Implications

Policy makers in the US and Israel would be interested in knowing how best to ensure Hezbollah's continued peace, but it would appear that little need be done to encourage them towards this goal. As discussed, non-violence is Hezbollah's natural state of existence, despite their reputation. Their primary objective as a group is to succeed in politics, and non-violence has helped them to that end. Thus, Hezbollah poses little risk, particularly for the United States and Israel.

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158. Wiegand, "Reformation of a Terrorist group," pp. 677.

So long as the current political environment remains the same, Hezbollah's calculus will not change: it will not be beneficial for them to attack Israel. Even if Iran gifted nuclear weapons to Hezbollah, the group's calculations would not change. Hezbollah would not attack Israel with a nuclear weapon since in all likelihood they would be unable to destroy Israel's second-strike capability— their ability to retaliate — meaning Hezbollah would have to assume that Tel Aviv would respond in kind, destroying that which Hezbollah seeks to protect: its constituency in Lebanon.

In conclusion, Israel does not have to fear a strike from Hezbollah since the group's *raison d'être* is not the destruction of Israel but winning the hearts and minds of Lebanese in order to solidify their role in the political system. This goal often calls for non-violence although may involve "minor political violence" domestically[159]. The more power Hezbollah acquires, however, the less likely violence becomes – against Israel or Lebanese. It is only when their political stature is threatened that Hezbollah engages in violence on Lebanese soil; their presence in the government has been responsible for maintaining years of peace vis-à-vis Israel, so the best way to prevent Hezbollah from engaging in violence is to ensure the growth and evolution of Hezbollah's political wing.

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159. Wiegand, "Reformation of a Terrorist group," pp. 677.

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