

Lebanese Hizballah – Political, Ideological and Organizational Highlights

29 October 2006

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Preface

The role of Hizballah in the last round of fighting in Lebanon demonstrated its importance both in the context of the Lebanese theatre and in Iran's efforts to expand its influence into the Arab Middle East. At the same time, it highlighted the exacerbating conflict between Sunnis and Shiites in the Muslim world. The gathering crisis between Iran and the international community over the former's nuclear weapons program also warrants a deeper look at this organization – Iran's foremost proxy in the Arab world and a potential tool for terrorist retaliation against the West in case of sanctions or military action against Iran.

This study will analyze salient elements of the political, religious and ideological, organizational and military aspects of this organization. The issues that will be discussed include:

1. General background and history of Hizballah - ideology, religious tenets and political and strategic doctrines
2. Organizational aspects, leadership, command and control
3. Iran and Syria – the religious, organizational, financial and operational relationship
4. Hizballah in Lebanon – its role and relationship with other Lebanese political forces
5. Military and terrorist modus operandi
6. Role in international terrorism and as a go-between for Iran with foreign terrorist organizations
7. Strategy in the conflict with Israel
8. Lessons from Israel's experience in confronting and deterring Hizballah

General Background

History

Hizballah was founded formally on February 16, 1985 when Sheikh Ibrahim al-Amin declared its manifesto. However, the roots of the organization go back to 1982. The conditions for the forming of a new radical Shiite organization were created by: the trauma of the Israeli invasion (the “Peace for Galilee” operation); the terminal collapse of the Lebanese state during the war; the vacuum formed by the exit of the PLO from its autonomous areas of control in Beirut and – more significantly – the Shiite areas of South Lebanon; and disappointment of the Shiites of the South from the Amal movement and the traditional Shiite community leaders.

The motivation on the part of Iran to found a Lebanese Shiite organization that would accept its patronage and operate under its auspices preceded the actual founding of Hizballah. Even before the Israel-Lebanon war of June 1982, the revolutionary regime in Iran had already realized that the Amal movement, founded by Musa al-Sadr (disappeared in 1978 in Libya) would not be a reliable Iranian proxy. However, it was the 1982 war and the disaffection of radical elements within Amal that provided the opportunity. The Iranian ambassador in Damascus, Ali Akbar Mohtashami-Pour, who was close to Ayatollah Khomeini, was quick to identify the opportunity that had arisen and began to bring together radical elements in the Amal movement.

The “raw material” that Iran used to create Hizballah was provided by a small number of Shiite religious students who had studied in Najaf and were deported by the Iraqi authorities before they completed their studies. These low-level scholars could not identify with the pragmatic and essentially secular message of Amal and with what they saw as the accommodating attitude of Nabih Berri and the Christian Phalanges towards Israel.

The founding of Hizballah however was not a mere organizational split, like many that had occurred in other Arab organizations that operated in Lebanon. It expressed a new trend in the identification of the political leadership of the Shiites of Lebanon. Amal, though its founder, Musa al-Sadr, was a cleric of Iranian origin, was essentially secular and saw itself as a Lebanese political party dedicated to bettering the lot of the unprivileged Shiites of Lebanon within the framework of Lebanon. The original group that became Hizballah and came together under the auspices of the Iranian ambassador reached out to a larger extra-national identification – with the rising star of revolutionary Iran.

Ideological Tenets

The three “pillars” of Hizballah’s ideology, as they appear in the texts of the movement are:

1. **Belief in Islam** as a comprehensive religion, which encompasses worship, concern for politics, economics, joint social responsibility, dialogue between the believers and piety.

2. **Jihad for the sake of Allah** (i.e. only for the sake of Allah and not “political wars”).
3. **The Rule of the Jurisprudent** (*velayat-e faqih* in Persian; *wilayat al-faqih* in Arabic) – the Khomeinist doctrine according to which the religious scholars should hold political power.

Sources of Hizballah’s Ideology

The religious ideology of Hizballah is in essence that of the Iranian Islamic Revolution. Iran never saw Hizballah as an indigenous Lebanese Shiite organization, but as a vanguard of the Iranian Islamic Revolution and a model for similar organizations in other countries – all of which would carry the uniform banner of the Islamic Revolution and the message of Khomeini.¹ The very name of Hizballah (Party of God) provides insight into the broad strategy that Iran envisaged for the organization. Therefore, from its inception, Hizballah did not restrict itself to a local Lebanese role, but viewed itself as representing the universal (or at least pan-Islamic) ambitions and principles of the Iranian Revolution.

Ideological and religious texts of Hizballah are almost exclusively written in Iran and translated into Arabic. Many of them bear the clear imprint of texts that were prepared, originally, for the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Interestingly, despite the fact that the Shiites of Lebanon have a vibrant history of Islamic scholarship, there is no evidence that Hizballah attempts, as a movement that represents that community, to promote the Lebanese Shiite scholarship as a primary source of its religious teachings.

In addition to the written doctrine, Hizballah accepts the total authority of the Iranian Supreme Leader as the “source of emulation” (*marja’ taqlid*) for all members of the organization (see below). The concept of the *marja’iyya* and *wilayat al-faqih* (the rule of the jurisprudent) that is at the core of the ideology of the Iranian Revolution subordinates all matters – religious, political and social – to the ruling of the Supreme Leader. Consequently, Hizballah’s own indigenous sources of authority are limited to tactical matters.

At the same time, Hizballah cannot ignore the indigenous Shiite religious leadership, which does not accept the Iranian tutelage and prefers the authority of Najaf over that of Qom. Hizballah maintains a dialog with the local Shiite Sheikhs who do not belong to the organization (see below – spiritual leadership) on issues relating to the Shiite community, but does not confer with them on major ideological or religious issues.

Jihad

Hizballah is first and foremost a “jihad” organization. Jihad is not a means alone to obtain a political objective but a “pillar” of the movement’s ideology. As such it has intrinsic value as a means to test the belief of the Muslim by putting him through trials

¹ Iran attempted to create other “Hizballahs” in Turkey, the Hijaz and the Gulf States, though most of them remained “front organizations” of the IRGC and never achieved a political status of their own.

and tribulations (in emulation of the Imams Ali and Hussein) and is the path towards unity with Allah's will; it serves the interests of the believers, and by doing so fulfills the Islamic obligation to serve the community (over and above the individual) and it "pays" as it will be rewarded in this world by Allah who will give the believers victory.² Hizballah accepts the traditional Shiite belief that the "initiated jihad" (*al-jihad al-ibtida'i*) is in abeyance pending the re-appearance of the Hidden Imam. Therefore the military jihad, in the eyes of Hizballah, is a **defensive jihad** (*al-jihad al-difa'i*), which is a duty for all Muslims when they face aggression.

In contrast to the Sunni jihadi-Salafi concept of defensive jihad, the Hizballah interpretation of this concept is not a spontaneous defense of the homeland, but a decision to be taken by the Ruler-Jurisprudent (*wali faqih*). He – and he alone – has the capability and authority to weigh all considerations and to take the decision whether the jihad should proceed or not. This concept of jihad is "inherited" from Iranian revolutionary ideology; however the Hizballah version lacks the "safety valve" that exists in Iran and has allowed Iranian leaders – including Khomeini himself – to "suspend" jihad (for example: against Iraq) on the basis of Realpolitik and "public interest" (*maslaha*) of the (Iranian) people. As Hizballah is – in its own eyes – a proxy organization, its leadership does not have the authority to determine the "public good". The *wali faqih* for Hizballah is the Iranian Supreme Leader – Khamene'i; only he has the right and the duty to determine when the interest of the public overrides the duty of jihad.³ His understanding of "public interest" though is not necessarily congruent to the interests of Lebanon in general, the Shiites of Lebanon or even of Hizballah as an organization; he takes into account the wider context of the conflict between Islam (or at least Shiite Islam) and the West, and implicitly, the primacy of Iran's national interest over all others.⁴ Therefore, Hizballah is expected to be willing to risk losses of its own for the greater good as defined in Iran. This principle may be relevant at a time when Hizballah sees itself as waging a war in the framework of a larger confrontation between the US and Israel on one side and Iran (and the "Muslims") on the other side.

The core belief in Hizballah's ideological texts is the centrality of jihad as a "doctrine and a program of action", through which a Muslim may "sacrifice his life for the sake of Allah and attain paradise". Martyrdom "for Allah's sake" (*shahada*) is not a necessary evil but the greatest reward that is accorded to a *mujahid* and the pinnacle of jihad. Hizballah documents quote the saying attributed to the Imam 'Ali (the fourth Caliph and founder of the Shi'a) that: "Jihad is one of the gateways to paradise, which Allah has opened unto His most loyal believers [only]." The role models of Hizballah are the Imams 'Ali and Hussein, who went into battle knowing they were heavily outnumbered and that they were going to become martyred. Hizballah itself is, therefore, dedicated to that principle and is portrayed as a paradigm of self-sacrifice, willing to ignore all "pragmatic" considerations out of commitment

² See Na'im Qassem, *Hizballah, The Story from Within*, (London: Saqi books, 2005), pp. 34–39.

³ *Ibid.* p. 39.

⁴ This is not seen as a capricious or cynical preference. Khomeini himself ruled that the continued existence of the Islamic Regime in Iran takes precedence over all other duties and considerations. This is because that is the only regime that can protect Islam, and its destruction would result in great danger for Islam in general.

to Allah.⁵ The *mujahid* derives his power from his “revolutionary sentiment”. The *mujahid* does not succumb to deprivation, but rather challenges it. This is the secret of the victories of Islam throughout the ages.⁶ The slogan of Hizballah – “For verily Hizballah (the Party of Allah) will overcome,”⁷ relates specifically to the dauntlessness of the organization in its waging of jihad.

The centrality of this creed is such that disarmament of the organization is seen as “suspension of jihad” which cannot be countenanced from a religious point of view. Such a suspension (and more so any permanent peace with the “oppressor”) is not a pragmatic political concession in light of the adversary’s superior power, but rather forsaking of a cardinal Islamic principle.

On the other hand, the ideology of Hizballah, following basic Shiite concepts of jihad⁸, allows for room for maneuver in determining whether the jihad should take the form of actual fighting or alternative forms of preparation for jihad which are equally important at a time that actual fighting is in abeyance (of course based on the orders of the *wali faqih*). These include “patience and steadfastness” (*sabr wa-sumud*), training, self-education and the “jihad of construction” (*jihad al-binaa*)⁹. Jihad is also described as activity which plays a societal role, as by its very nature (the willingness of the individual to sacrifice himself) it demonstrates the primacy of the needs of society rather than those of the individual alone: religious piety; independence and protection of the homeland against the avarice of the infidel imperialists; and the struggle to abolish oppression.¹⁰

Israel

Ideological texts of Hizballah, public statements by its leaders and other indications show that the organization sees Israel as the Nemesis of the Muslims in general and is ideologically committed to the Iranian goal of destruction of Israel. The attitude to the State of Israel is permeated with anti-Semitic motifs, which are prevalent in the Arab world and revolutionary Iran. In Hizballah writings the Jews are the quintessential conspirator and disseminator of evil. Primers for teaching Shiite children in Lebanon in the Hizballah school system show Jews in caricatures reminiscent of the Nazi imagery.

Israel therefore is perceived as both an extension of the Jews, and hence an illegitimate political entity occupying Muslim lands, and as a strategic threat to Iranian interests. Israel’s strategic and conventional military advantages do not testify to its independent capabilities but to its status as an outpost of the colonialist West, which bolsters its “agent” in the Middle East. The Israeli society is depicted as an

⁵ *Al-Jihad* (Pamphlet found in South Lebanon), The Imam Khomeini Cultural Center, Harat Huriek, Beirut.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 34.

⁷ Surat al-Ma’ida (5:56). The context of the verse is the warning against “taking Jews and Christians as friends” and the prophecy that Allah will choose those who “love Him, lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, wage jihad for Allah’s sake and do not fear censure” to be victorious.

⁸ Unlike the Sunni Salafi doctrine relating to “suspension of jihad” which makes any ceasefire due to practical considerations an expression of loss of faith in Allah.

⁹ See below in the discussion of the Executive Council.

¹⁰ Various pamphlets found in South Lebanon.

artificial society; unlike the Shiites who are accustomed to suffering with patience and forbearing, the Jews in Israel are seen as rootless agents of their masters, who remain in place as long as they enjoy benefits and will flee if they will be caused to suffer or if their endeavor turns out to be a failure.

On the political level, however, towards those in Lebanon who are not a party to this goal, Hizballah justifies its military presence in Lebanon and activity against Israel on the *casus belli* of Israeli occupation of Lebanese lands. Therefore, even were all the outstanding disputes between Israel and Lebanon (or Hizballah in its capacity as the Lebanese resistance) settled, Hizballah would not lay down its arms voluntarily and accept a peace agreement between Israel and Lebanon. Nasrallah himself has clearly stated that after the Shab'a Farms dispute is solved, Hizballah will continue to resist the Zionist entity, as the very existence of Israel endangers Lebanon.

The United States and the West

Hizballah's ideological attitude towards the US is identical to that of the most radical elements in the Iranian regime. The "axis of evil" in Hizballah statements is composed of the United States, Britain and Israel, in that order (it is of interest that there is very little negative mention of France – the erstwhile colonial power in Lebanon that maintains strong influence and interests in the "Levant"). America is a quintessentially evil force, hostile to the Muslims that aspires to corrupt them.¹¹ The United States epitomizes the most dangerous aspects of the Western Civilization – both corrupt and seductive. It represents (along with the UK) global "arrogance" (*istikbar* or *takabbur*) and *taghut* (oppression – pretensions of divinity)¹². The enemy who incorporates evil (the Great Satan) is totally demonized, and as a result is not averse to or deterred from any act – no matter how despicable it may be. The United States therefore represents *Hizb al-Shaytan* (Party of the Satan), which is pitted against *Hizb Allah* (the Party of Allah).¹³ The latter is characterized by humility, suffering, and martyrdom, which are the defining traits of the Imams – particularly 'Ali and Hussein, the classic role models that are embedded deep in the Shiite creed.

Ideological texts of Hizballah – almost all of them translated from Farsi – are

¹¹ The total demonization of the United States was an important leitmotif of the Khomeini era and appears unambiguously in his public Last Will and Testament: "The USA is the foremost enemy of Islam. It is a terrorist state by nature that has set fire to everything everywhere and its ally, the international Zionism, does not stop short of any crime to achieve its base and greedy desires, crimes that the tongue and pen are ashamed to utter or write. The stupid idea of a Greater Israel urges them to commit any shameful crime... What can be a better source of pride than the fact that the USA with all its military might, its boastfulness, its claims, its mass media and its allies among puppet regimes, has been so dumbfounded and disgraced in its dealings with the dauntless Iranian nation and the land of His Holiness Baqiyatullah..." <<http://www.irna.com/occasion/ertehal/english/will/>>.

¹² *Taghut* was a demon worshipped by the Quraysh tribe before Islam (Surat al-Baqara, 2:257-9). It is defined in Shiite theology as "everything that is worshipped, or followed or obeyed other than Allah" and is, therefore, the opposite of Allah (i.e., Satan and his followers). *Taghut* is the most extreme level of rebellion against Allah and entails a mortal arrogating to his self-divinity. This concept is closely linked to the idea of *istikbar* or *takabbur* (arrogance), a trait that precludes a person's entrance into paradise. These traits are diametrically opposed in Shiite thought to the humility of the Imams. Thomas Patrick Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manhorial Publishers PVT Ltd., 1985/1999), p. 625 <<http://www.islam.com>>.

¹³ Surat al-Mujadila (58:19-22).

commensurate with the perception of the United States and Britain in the more radical Iranian circles. America is portrayed as an “occupying power” which exterminated the “red Indians” – the original inhabitants of America and oppresses the Blacks of America (as described in the book “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”).¹⁴ America’s claims to freedom of expression and equality are, in the eyes of the Hizballah texts, unsubstantiated; the press is controlled by the large capitalist corporations and information is censored by the government. Furthermore, America is the “source of terrorism” in the world by the use of nuclear weapons against Japan in World War II, support of Israel against the Palestinians, etc.

Along with the image of the United States as an omnipotent superpower (which justifies any military setback against the American proxy – Israel – and glorifies any success), Hizballah projects an image of the US as a sinking power, which has over-extended itself in Afghanistan and Iraq and is being gradually defeated by the forces of Islam.¹⁵

Social Issues

The core tenet of Hizballah’s social ideology is the identification of the Shiites in general, and in Lebanon in particular as the *mustad’afin* or *mahrumin* – the oppressed, disadvantaged and disenfranchised – who must be redeemed. Hizballah calls for complete “justice and equality among the Lebanese” and abolition of “political sectarianism that represents the center of the essential flaw in the formula of the Lebanese political system and its social structure.” This is to be replaced by “a just and balanced electoral system that treats all the Lebanese even-handedly, allows for real representation, and leads towards developing the Lebanese political status through the approbation of Lebanon as one constituency with a proportional representation system.” The rationale behind this demand is, of course, the fact that the Shiites are the largest single community in Lebanon and such a change would place them in power (as in Iraq).¹⁶

On other social matters such as women’s rights, Hizballah skirts the contradiction between the severe Islamic code inherent in the Iranian ideology and the mores of Lebanese society. This is done by stating that the Lebanese woman's role “is based on her being the other half that raises children and is effective in all the political, educational, social, cultural and economical life. Women must neither be treated as supplements nor as commodities of advertisement.”¹⁷

The unique multi-sectarian nature of Lebanon is reflected in Hizballah’s attitude towards relations between the different communities. Hizballah maintains a special

¹⁴ *Amrika – Asl al-Irhab* (America – the Source of Terror), Hizballah document found in South Lebanon, pp. 20–22.

¹⁵ See, for example, Nasrallah’s speech in the “sit-in” against the Siniora government. He depicts the Lebanese government as a pawn of the US, which despite the unprecedented support it received from the US, it is losing. The US itself – and especially President George Bush – is the one who “most needs help, who most needs rescuing” as it “drowns in the region’s quicksand from Afghanistan, to Iraq to Palestine to Lebanon.”

http://moqavemat.ir/?lang=en&state=showbody_news&row_id=6980.

¹⁶ The Electoral Program of Hizballah, 1996.

¹⁷ The Electoral Program of Hizballah, 1996.

unit for relations with the Christian community (perceived as the most hostile to its agenda, and the most threatened by Shiite ascendancy) and promotes initiatives of Islamic ecumenism towards the Sunnis. At the same time, it refrains from any steps (in the legislature or in public statements) that can be construed as an attempt to turn Lebanon into an Islamic state (such as demands to impose *Shari'a*, legislation against inter-marriage of Muslim women with non-Muslim men, punishments for infringements of the Ramadan, etc.).

Hizballah maintains a broad social support network which emphasizes its ideology as the champion of the “dispossessed”. This network though has a second – more political – objective; it highlights the impotence of the central Lebanese government in caring for the Shiites, thus strengthening the identification of Hizballah as the political representative of the Shiites of Lebanon.

Leadership, Structure, Command and Control

The Secretary General – Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah

The leadership of Hizballah focuses around Hasan Nasrallah. Nasrallah was born in 1960 in the Bourj Hammoud neighborhood east of the Beirut. In 1975 he moved to the village of Bassouriyeh and joined the Amal movement. Later he moved to Najaf for religious studies in the seminary (*hawza*) of that city. In 1978 he returned to Lebanon, where he studied with Sheikh ‘Abbas al-Musawi, who was destined to become the leader of Hizballah. Nasrallah joined Amal and in 1982 became one of the first leaders of Hizballah. In 1989 he left for Qom where he continued his religious education but soon returned to Lebanon where he succeeded Musawi when the latter was killed by Israel in 1992.

Since his first election Nasrallah has become the undisputed leader of Hizballah both in the eyes of the members of the organization in Lebanon and for its Iranian patrons. Nasrallah was last re-elected to a fifth three-year term of office as Secretary General in August 2004 (until August 2007).¹⁸ It is noteworthy that the party bylaws limit a Secretary General to two terms of office. Nasrallah was “exempted” from this rule by special dispensation of the Supreme Leader, Khamene’i, a fact that emphasizes his value for the Iranian regime. This is particularly of interest in light of the fact that Nasrallah did not receive all around support from Iran when he was elected. At first, he was seen as identified more with Khatami and the “political” tendency in the organization, while the former SG, Subhi Tufayli was identified with the conservative faction in Iran. However, over the years, Nasrallah gained the respect of all Iranian factions and there is no significant threat to his predominance in the leadership.

Hasan Nasrallah was elected “Secretary General” of Hizballah but over the years became the unchallenged symbolic leader of the organization, placing all other historic members of the leadership in the shadows. He has weaved around himself a personality cult. Hizballah's policy towards Israel and the United States is based, first and foremost on the conclusions that Nasrallah himself arrives at from his eclectic information gathering. It appears that there is little if any influence of other members of the leadership on the forming of Israel’s deterrent image in the eyes of Nasrallah. In his speeches – particularly those directed towards Israelis – he emphasizes his “knowledge” of Israeli society; declares that he reads Israeli press (Haaretz and Maariv) and claims to have intimate intelligence of Israel, having learned of Israeli leaders by reading their books (inter alia, Ariel Sharon’s memoirs and Benjamin Netanyahu’s book “A Place under the Sun”).¹⁹ According to recent reports, the Hizballah Convention convened in October 2008 and appointed Nasrallah to an additional term, with the title of “General Guide” (*Murshid ‘Aam*) – a title reminiscent of the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood organizations as well as of the Iranian position of *rahbar*.

¹⁸ See Hizballah’s official website article on the “Secretary General”:
<http://www.moqawama.org/amsera.php?filename=20050420145432>.

¹⁹ http://www.aljazeera.com/cgi-bin/review/people_full_story.asp?service_id=6849.

Psychological sketches of Nasrallah²⁰ depict him as megalomaniac, self-centered, fearful for his own fate (in spite of protestations that he is willing to become a martyr), and most important – a person with great faith in his own analytical capabilities, and therefore able to analyze the enemy (Israel) on his own.²¹ He exploits the fact that his son, Hadi, was martyred by Israel, which accords him the status of a father of a *shahid*. He is also greatly influenced by his consultations with Iran and much of the intelligence that colors Hizballah's perceptions and intentions comes from IRGC intelligence.

A recent expression of the Nasrallah personality cult has emerged from the last Lebanon war. During the war, he was almost alone among the Hizballah leadership who appeared in the media. The dramaturgy of his hiding during the war and his "disappearance" until the mass rally that the organization held (September 22) was staged to arouse associations of the "Hidden Imam". Nasrallah is glorified in the pamphlets and websites of Hizballah in a manner, which almost competes with the attitude towards Khomeini.²² The name that he chose for the war itself – *al-Intisar al-Ilahi* (The Divine Victory) derives of the Arabic root of his own name – *Nasr-Allah* (Victory of God). The rhetoric surrounding his personal commitment to non-strategic and intangible issues is also geared to provoke associations with the great figures of the Shiite pantheon. In his rhetoric, he dwells on concepts of honor and nobility; the abduction of the soldiers was "Operation Fulfilled Promise" ("*al-Wa'd al-Sadiq*"), and maintains that the Shiites of South Lebanon will return to their homes with honor (*karama*).²³

Other Political and Military Leaders

Nasrallah is keen to project the impression that all strategic issues are agreed upon in the "Deciding Consultative Council" (DCC). This does not appear to be true. Since Hasan Nasrallah was elected Secretary General in 1992, he has evolved into the autocratic leader of the organization. There is no indication that major strategic decisions have been taken only after deliberation in the Council or even that all members of the Council were cognizant of such decisions.

Other major leaders in Hizballah include the members of the DCC. It seems that the most prominent among them is Sheikh Na'im Qassem. Qassem is widely considered the "intellectual" of the movement. He was very close to the former Secretary General, 'Abbas al-Musawi, but when the latter was killed, Qassem was not as well networked with Iran as Nasrallah. He accepted the verdict and has grown in personal prestige and influence both within Lebanon and with Iran. Not all of the rest of the top leaders of the organization have a power base of their own. Those who do include: Hussein Khalil, Ibrahim al-Sayyid and Nabil Qaouq. 'Imad Moghniyya, also

²⁰ The reference here is to sketches prepared in Israeli Military Intelligence (AMAN).

²¹ Interview with Brig. Gen (ret.) Yossef Kuperwasser, former Deputy Head of MI, September 10, 2006.

²² Ideological pamphlets show three pictures: Nasrallah, Khamene'i and Khomeini. The Hizballah website – <http://www.moqawama.org> – posts articles under the title "Why we love Sayyid Nasrallah". Among documents found in south Lebanon were children's painting booklet in which all famous martyrs are portrayed, with Nasrallah being the first in line before Khomeini and Khamene'i.

²³ This is a pre-Islamic (*Jahili*) term, which is a part of the Arab set of values transferred to Islam, and refers to male honor endowed upon one's family, tribe and people.

had a power base of his own and it is not clear whether his successor has control over it. The hard-line former SG of Hizballah, Subhi Tufayli has withdrawn from all leadership positions, rebelled against Nasrallah with the support of senior conservative clerics in Iran and remains perennially at odds with Nasrallah.

The issue of Nassrallah's succession in the case of his demise has been raised since the 2006 war. It is difficult to pinpoint which of these persons would be the successor of Nasrallah, were he to disappear from the stage. Nasrallah himself has refrained from naming a successor (he himself was not named as successor by his predecessor). A leading candidate would probably be Sheikh Na'im Qassem – Nasrallah's deputy who is considered to be loyal to him. Hajj Hussein Khalil would also be a potential candidate. According to reports from Iran, the Iranians have already appointed Hashem Safi-a-din, the head of the Executive Council and Nassrallah's cousin as his successor. This leak to the media seems to be intended to dissuade Israel from attempting to kill Nassrallah, thinking that his death would create a leadership crisis in the organization. Another possibility would be the formation of a collective leadership for a period of transition. In any case, the final say would be in the hands of Iran.

Spiritual Leadership

Lebanese Shiites traditionally tended to look for spiritual guidance to Najaf and not to Qom or other Iranian centers of scholarship. The most prominent of the modern Lebanese scholars such as Imam Musa al-Sadr, Ayatollah Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din and Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah all studied in Najaf (though Musa al-Sadr also studied in Qom).

The traditional spiritual leadership of the Shiites in Lebanon is the "religious scholars of Jabel 'Amel" (*'ulama Jabel 'Amel*), represented by the "Association of the Scholars of Jabel 'Amel" (*Hayat 'Ulama Jabel 'Amel*). This association is headed by pro-Syrian Sheikh 'Afif al-Naboulsi. Al-Naboulsi also heads the main Shiite religious school in Lebanon – the *hawza* (the Shiite religious seminaries) of al-Imam al-Sadeq in Saida (Sidon), South Lebanon. Senior Shiite clerics who are associated with Hizballah include: Sheikh Muhammad Yazbak (a member of the Deciding Consultative Council), Sheikh Muhammad Isma'il Khaliq (Ayatollah Montazeri's representative in Lebanon and founder of an Islamic academy in Beirut) and Sheikh Zuhayr Kanj (leader of a Hizballah-backed coalition of clerics). There are also a few Sunni clerics who have been pro-Hizballah such as Sheikh Mahir Hammud (a Sunni from Sidon).

Other Lebanese Shiite clerics however remain out of the sphere of Hizballah. The former Secretary General of the movement, Sheikh Subhi al-Tufaili continues to lead his followers in the Beqaa, even openly rebelling against Hizballah in 1997. There are also clerics who are associated with Amal rather than Hizballah, such as the late Sheikh Mohammad Mahdi Shams al-Din and his successor as Head of the Higher Islamic Shiite Council, Sheikh 'Abd al-Amir Qabalan. (Qabalan is the Deputy Head of the Council)

Hizballah, however, receives all its religious indoctrination and direction from

Iran and recognizes the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i as the "*wali faqih*" ("ruler-jurisprudent") and *marja' taqlid*.²⁴ The acceptance of Khamene'i as *marja'* for Hizballah has both religious and political connotations. In essence, it means that the leadership of Hizballah is bound to obey the edicts of Khamene'i without question. Since the Iranian brand of Shiite Islam sees politics as a central area of religious life, these edicts cover a wide range of issues. Thus, decisions on participation in elections, joining or breaking with the Lebanese government or assassination of political opponents (if such acts may cause repercussions for the community) are all referred to Khamene'i for the final decision.

The mechanism of the relationship between a Shiite Muslim and his *marja'* is traditionally a bond for the lifetime of the *marja'* or his follower. A Shiite Muslim may only be a *muqallid* (follower, literally imitator) of a living *marja'*. In principle, when a *marja'* dies, his authority dies with him and his *muqallidun* must accept the authority of another *marja'*. This principle operates as well on the collective level. If all the *'ulama* of a certain generation accept a given ruling (by consensus, *ijma'*) such a decision is only binding on that generation and not in the future. The Iranian regime's attempt to impose Khamene'i's leadership through the residual authority of Khomeini is a break with tradition. Whereas most *marja'*s kept their distance from politics, Khamene'i's position as *marja'* indicates not only religious but political guidance.

As an extension of the Islamic Revolution, Hizballah attempts to imitate Iran in regards to the structure of the internal religious establishment as well. The power of the *marja'* of a school derives from popular recognition of his spiritual authority, and his temporal wealth, which came from religious tithes (*khums*) from his *muqallidun* throughout the world. In Iran, the Islamic has brought under its regulation much of this financial network inside Qom, bringing the main elements in that *hawza* under government control.²⁵ The *'ulama* who were the original core of Hizballah brought to the organization a "dowry" of their own disciples. These disciples accepted the basic tenets of allegiance to the Iranian leadership but continued to see their own teachers as their immediate sources of authority. The military and political leadership of the organization and the Iranian supervisors have a vested interest in breaking down those intermediate lines of loyalty. They have attempted to do this by providing financial support to the *Husseiniyyat* (religious schools) in Lebanon and bringing as many as possible of the local Shiite clerics in Lebanon into its fold.

However it is not clear to what extent they have succeeded. Without the sources of power and authority of a state this objective can only be achieved in a limited manner. Khamene'i's claim to the title of *marja' taqlid* has not overcome the traditional orientation of Lebanese Shiites towards Najaf. The Iranian case has to overcome not only the deep-rooted Arab-Persian animosity, but it is further complicated by the dubious nature of Khamene'i claim to that status even among the clerics of Qom. The

²⁴ *Marja' taqlid* is the highest level of Shiite cleric, who serves as a spiritual mentor and model of emulation, whose edicts are obligatory for his followers. For details on the Iranian attempt to impose Khamene'i as *marja' taqlid* in Lebanon, see *Al-Hayat* (London) January 25, 2003, issue 14552; February 4, 2003, issue 14562.

²⁵ See Mehdi Khalaji, "The Last Marja: Sistani and the End of Traditional Religious Authority in Shiism," *Policy Focus* #59, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 2006.

Amal movement, though allied politically with Hizballah, continues to view Ayatollah ‘Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani as the “Supreme Shiite *marja*” (a title that was accorded in the past to Grand Ayatollah Abul-Qassim Khoei (1899 – August 8, 1992).²⁶ Since a Shiite Muslim’s affiliation with a *marja*’ is customarily a personal and not an institutional issue, it is not clear to what extent even most members of Hizballah accept Khamene’i as their *marja*’.

The Lebanese Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah is also viewed as a *marja*’ and has a certain following among Lebanese Shiites. In the past, the Sheikh Fadlallah was widely perceived as the spiritual leader or the "moral compass" of the organization. This status however is not clear-cut. True, during its first stages, Hizballah was closely affiliated with Fadlallah, whose radical positions and activism had made him a political rival of Musa al-Sadr. However, Fadlallah saw himself as a spiritual leader in his own right, and consistently refused to accept Iranian religious control. He had served as the personal representative of Ayatollah Khoei in Lebanon since 1976 (when he returned to Lebanon from Najaf) and when Khoei passed away in 1992, he transferred his allegiance to the aged Ayatollah Muhammad Riza Golpaigani, pointedly ignoring Khamene’i’s claim to be recognized as the *marja*’ *taqlid* of the Shiites outside of Iran. After the death of Golpaigani in 1993, Fadlallah continued to refuse to recognize Khamene’i and saw Ayatollah Sistani as the senior Shiite cleric. His refusal to accept the Iranian yoke brought him into an open clash with Iran and Khamene’i’s supporters in Lebanon. The latter began a smear campaign aimed at de-legitimizing Fadlallah as a religious authority. His theoretical religious writings were attacked as near heresy, he was accused of “distortion” of the history of the Shi’a and even of abuse of funds. His books were banned in Iran. Gradually, Fadlallah fell away from Hizballah and turned his attention to serving as a religious authority for Shiites outside of Lebanon.

There are no senior Shiite clerics in Lebanon who have accepted the Iranian spiritual tutelage, though many of them side with Hizballah politically. Some of the senior Shiite Sheikhs in Lebanon are even outspokenly anti-Hizballah. These include the Mufti of Tyre, Sheikh ‘Ali al-Amin²⁷; Sheikh Muhammad Hasan al-Amin²⁸; Sheikh Muhammad al-Hajj Hasan²⁹, Head of a “Free Shiite Coalition” (an anti-Iranian group).

Organizational Structure

Hizballah is organized in a hierarchic structure, which integrates all the areas of its activities: military, political, social etc. Unlike many other terrorist organizations (IRA, Hamas), it has never claimed that there exists a clear distinction or a firewall

²⁶ See the homepage of Amal: <http://www.amal-mouvement.org.lb>.

²⁷ Sheikh ‘Ali al-Amin has been anti-Hizballah for some time. His position may be influenced by the fact that his area (Tyre) is predominantly Sunni.

²⁸ Sheikh Muhammad Hasan al-Amin is in contact with Lebanese Christians including the right wing “Christian Forces” and is involved in various ecumenical meetings.

²⁹ See Walid Phares “Hizballa’s Offensive in Lebanon,” <http://worlddefensereview.com/phares120806.shtml>.

between the “political” and “military” wing of the organization; on the contrary, it prides itself on the complete integration of the two aspects.³⁰

The backbone of the organization is the “Central Council” (*al-Majlis al-Markazi*), which is composed of 200 of the original founders and senior members of the organization. The CC includes clerics and laymen, ostensibly in a proportion of 1:6, though the former clearly carry more weight than the latter. The CC is the “sovereign” body, which elects the “Deciding Consultative Council” every three years. Since the founding of the organization six conferences of the Central Council have been held (the sixth was held in July 2001). The CC elects the members of the Deciding Council in two stages, through a mechanism reminiscent of that of the “Council of Guardians of the Constitution” in Iran:

1. A preliminary stage of vetting of the candidates by the clerics, allowing non-clerics to participate only if they fit certain criteria – a strong religious belief and a proven track record in a necessary area such as education, health etc.
2. After a short-list has been prepared, seven members are elected to the Deciding Consultative Council. The seven choose the Secretary General from among them.

The Deciding Consultative Council (*Majlis Shura al-Qarar*)

The top leadership of the organization is the “Deciding Consultative Council” (*Shura al-Qarar*), which is composed of nine members – seven elected and two representatives of Iran:

1. The Secretary General (a post formed for the first time only in 1989 after the death of Khomeini), Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah, who heads the Council.
2. The Deputy Secretary General, Sheikh Na’im Qassem.
3. The Assistant to the Secretary General, al-Hajj Hussein Khalil.
4. The Head of the Political Council, Sayyid Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyid.
5. Head of the Executive Council, Sayyid Hashem Safi al-Din.
6. Head of the Judiciary Council, Sheikh Muhammad Yazbak.
7. Head of the Jihad Council, allegedly Mustafa Shehada (succeeded ‘Imad Moghniya AKA Sayed Jawad Nur al-Din
8. Two senior Iranian officials – a representative of the IRGC/al-Qods Force and a representative of the Iranian Embassy in Beirut.

The DCC is responsible for the planning, managing and implementation of the organization’s policy in all areas. It controls a number of subordinate councils, headed by its members: political, military, parliamentary, judicial, etc. (See diagram in appendix.) Each of these councils is chaired by a member of the DCC who is responsible for the activities of the organization in that sector. The Executive Council and the Political Council are the most senior. The day-to-day activities of the

³⁰ Muhammad Fanish to *al-Manar TV* (Lebanon), January 18, 2002; Hasan Nasrallah to *al-Majalla* (Saudi Arabia), March 24, 2004; Hasan Nasrallah to *al-Mustaqbal* (Lebanon), December 31, 2000.

organization though are handled by an “Executive Council”³¹ with the tactical planning and execution of military and terrorist activities administered by the “Jihad Council” which was headed by ‘Imad Moghniyya and is now headed apparently by Mustafa Shehada (see below). It is noteworthy that Moghaniya, who was responsible for this central subject, spent much of his time in Iran and was arguably the most intimately connected to Iran of the entire Hizballah leadership. Moghniyya was a member of the DCC, however in the light of his status as wanted by the US, he used the cover name of Jawad Nur al-Din.³²

The Secretary General of the organization is chosen by the DCC and is portrayed as *primo inter pares*. According to the party laws the Secretary General can serve for only two terms. Nevertheless, Hasan Nasrallah was elected in August 2004 for a fifth term after the issue was brought to the Iranian Supreme Leader, Khamene’i.

The Executive Council (*al-Majlis al-Tanfidhi*)

The role of the Executive Council is to run the day-to-day affairs of the organization’s activities. The head of the Executive Council has “assistants” who represent the different “regions” (*mintaqqa*, pl: *manatiq*) of the party. These “regions” maintain their own structure with a *shura* of their own and a local leadership. After the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon, the “southern region” was divided into two: a “northern” southern region, responsible for the area north of the Litani River (Saida, Zahrani, Nabatiyya, Tuffah Region, Jezzine) and a “southern” southern region, south of the Litani and up to the Israeli border (Tyre, Bint Jbeil, Marj ‘Ayun, Hasbaya).

The head of the Executive Council (Sayyid Hashem Safi al-Din) heads eight dedicated units:

1. The Social Unit, headed by Hussein Zu’aytar, deals with the social infrastructure of the organization and coordinates the social NGO’s (for details, see below).
2. The Islamic Health Unit operates hospitals and clinics, which provide inexpensive or even free medical care (see below).
3. The Education Unit, headed by Hajj Yusuf Meri’ (see below – training and education).
4. The Information Unit (see below “Use of Media and Psyop) is headed by Hajj Hasan ‘Izz al-Din and coordinates the extensive media network of the organization.
5. The Syndicate Unit, headed by Hajj Hashem Salhab, is a relatively new unit, formed in 1996 to coordinate the representatives of Hizballah in the Lebanese unions and professional guilds (lawyers, doctors, engineers, students, etc.).
6. The External Relations Unit – this unit was also formed in 1996 and is led by Sheikh ‘Ali Da’oun. The unit is responsible for the organizations international relations and relations with NGO’s. This unit does not seem to play an

³¹ Headed by Hashem Safi al-Din.

³² Nasrallah rarely refers to Moghniyya, though he has denied the claim that Jawad Nur al-Din is a cover name for Moghniyya.

important role in these relations as most are managed directly by other members of the DCC or – if they are important enough – by the Secretary General himself.

7. The Finance Unit – exists since 1990 and is headed by Hajj Sultan al-As'ad (for details, see below).
8. The Engagement and Coordination Unit (*Wahdat al-Irtibat wa-al-Tansiq*) is an internal police and security organization (see below).

The Social Unit

The Social Unit is one of the most important non-military bodies of Hizballah. The organization's social infrastructure guarantees the loyalty of the Shiite constituency and serves as a civilian "front" for much of the military activities (e.g. transfer of funds, weapon caches, recruitment, training centers in the guise of civilian educational centers etc.). The social unit is responsible for a number of NGO's, the most prominent of them:

1. The Khomeini Emdad (support) Committee is one of the oldest NGO's belonging to Hizballah. It was founded in 1982. Hajj Ali Zriek heads it. It focuses on aid to south Lebanon and serves as Hizballah's main arm for building a power base in that area. It runs seminaries for teachers, elementary schools and sports centers, which serve as recruitment centers for Hizballah.
2. Al-Shahid (The Martyr) Foundation was founded in 1982 and is currently headed by Haj Hussein Shami. It is also modeled after the Iranian Bonyad Shahid (Martyr Foundation). The purpose of this foundation is to support the families of the martyrs and prisoners with financial aid, employment, etc.
3. Al-Jarha (Wounded) Foundation was founded in 1990 to support the wounded members of the organization and their families. It is currently headed by Hajj Abu al-Fadl. It arranges rehabilitation and compensation for the wounded of the organization and provides health, education, professional training, and marital matches for the wounded.
4. Jihad al-Binaa' Developmental Association is headed by Sheikh Ibrahim Isma'il, and is one of the most important of Hizballah's NGO's. The concept of *Jihad al-Binaa'* (the jihad of construction – establishing civilian and military infrastructures to reinforce the organization) is unique to the Iranian doctrine. Hizballah's Jihad al-Binaa' was founded in 1988 and is formally an autonomous association. It is active in construction in the Shiite areas (south Beirut, South Lebanon and the Beqaa Valley), concentrating on works, which are essential for the rural Shiite community: water reservoirs, electric generators, roads, irrigation, etc. It also deals with much fanfare with rebuilding of homes and infrastructures damaged by Israeli military action. This organization is, in essence, a copy of the Iranian *Jihad-e Sazandegi* (jihad of building/construction), the goal of which was to assist anti-royalist families whose houses had been damaged under the Pahlavi (ex-Shah) rule, during the Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War, as well as to solve the pressing housing problems of the weak and traditional sectors of society.

The Finance Unit

The unit is responsible for the financial management of the organizations, bookkeeping and allocation of funds to the other units. This unit does not seem to have much control over the transfer of funds from Iran, but does seem to oversee the collection of the tithe for Khamene'i from members of the organization (as *khums* – the traditional tithe that Shiites pay to their *marja' taqlid*). This is done on Nasrallah's behalf, as he is Khamene'i's personal representative in Lebanon. This unit is also responsible for the management of the organization's investments (stores, supermarkets, gas stations, restaurants, construction companies etc.). This unit is closely linked to Iran as most of the organization's financial assets are held in the Iranian Bank Saderat. This unit is also responsible for the "treasury" of the organization – Bayt al-Mal and the "Youser Company for Finance and Investment" headed by Hussein al-Shami. Bayt al-Mal serves as a bank, creditor and investment arm for Hizballah while Youser serves as an instrument for securing loans and for financing business deals.

The Islamic Health Unit

The Islamic Health Unit provides medical services to almost half a million Shiites in Lebanon. Its official budget is about 5 million dollars per annum. The actual presence of Hizballah in the health sector is much higher than this budget implies, since the organization has taken over the health infrastructure of the failed Lebanese government and uses government funds to support activities, which it appears to sponsor.

The Engagement and Coordination Unit

This unit deals with investigation of individuals or groups that are perceived as a risk to Hizballah either politically or socially. It arrests common criminals (murderers and robbers) and suspects in espionage for Israeli or other intelligence services (usually, even when the arrested are linked to an Arab country, Hizballah prefers to claim that they were working for Israel in order to enhance its image as winning the intelligence war against Israel and to intimidate any real Israeli assets). When common criminals are arrested, the unit frequently hands them over to the Lebanese authorities. Suspects in espionage cases are also handed over occasionally, though frequently they are tried by Hizballah courts and summarily executed. The unit is also involved in mediating conflicts between Shiites and other communities on a local level.

The Political Council – Politburo (*al-Majlis al-Siyasi*)

The Political Council of Hizballah is not a decision making body but rather a consultative body. It follows the day-to-day management of the party apparatus, prepares the party platform, and engages in forging alliances with various political parties in Lebanon. It also prepares the election campaign of Hizballah as a political party in Lebanon. The head of the politburo is usually a member of the DCC or a senior member of the organization who was not elected to the DCC. It currently numbers 11 members but has included up to 14 members.

A member of the DCC – Sayyid Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyid, heads the politburo currently. Its members include senior members of the organization with power bases

in different areas of the Shiite community in Lebanon³³ and focuses on Hizballah's manifestation as a political party in Lebanon. There is no evidence that the PC discusses or decides on the cardinal issues relating to Hizballah's military agenda or the jihad against Israel.

The Jihad Council (*al-Majlis al-Jihadi*)

The Secretary General heads the "Jihad Council" formally. Until his death in February 2008, it was headed de facto by Jawad Nur al-Din (Hajj 'Imad Fayeze Moghniyya³⁴) and composed of incumbent and former commanders of the militia of Hizballah, and a senior representative of the IRGC – usually the commander of the IRGC/ al-Qods Force in Lebanon. As noted above, there has been unconfirmed information that Mustafa Shehada has been appointed Moghniyya's successor.

The Jihad Council is responsible for drawing up an intelligence estimate of the enemy, possible enemy courses of action, and proposals for the general strategy of the units. The strategy is then brought to the decision of the DCC and – if necessary to the Supreme Leader in Iran. The Jihad Council also issues detailed operational plans down to the level of the exact disposition of "fighting groups" (*majmu'at qitaliyya*) at a squad level³⁵ in the basic defensive plan for an area or in an offensive plan (e.g. kidnapping soldiers or attacks in the Shab'a area). However, once the fighting has commenced, the Jihad Council does not wield direct control over the tactical operations of the forces in the field. The Hizballah concept at such a stage is to allow a high degree of freedom of operation to the local forces, with strategic control by the Secretary General himself.

The Judicial Council (*al-Majlis al-Qada'i*)

The Hizballah Judicial Council is ostensibly an internal disciplinary court for the party. In fact it has issued judgments against Lebanese Shiites for "collaboration", including death sentences. The council is composed of the Qadis (Islamic judges) affiliated with Hizballah and senior officials in the organization's judiciary system. The Judicial Council deals primarily in mediation and conflict resolution between members of the organization and within the Shiite community. The Judicial system of Hizballah includes a "High Court", headed by a "Central Qadi" (*al-Qadi al-Markazi*), who is appointed by the DCC; three regional courts (Beqaa, Beirut and South Lebanon) headed by a Qadi; and lower courts in the townships headed by Sheikhs affiliated with Hizballah. The final decision in all cases can be referred to the Iranian Supreme Leader in his capacity as the *marja' taqlid*.

³³ These include: Mahmud Kumati (Deputy Head of the Political Council), Sheikh Muhammad Kawtharani, Sayyid Nawaf al-Musawi, Sayyid Hasan Fadlallah, Hajj Hasan Hudruj, Hajj Muhammad Fanish, Hajj Hasan 'Izz al-Din, Hajj 'Abd al-Majid 'Amer, Hajj Muhammad 'Afif, Hajj Ghaleb Abu Zaynab, Sheikh Khudr Nur al-Din, Rima Fakhri, Muhammad Ra'ad, Ahmad Malli.

³⁴ 'Imad Moghniyya was responsible for numerous terrorist attacks: hijacking planes, abducting Western diplomats, blowing up the Israeli Embassy and the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, etc. There is an international arrest warrant against him.

³⁵ Captured document of the Jihad Council: Operational Plan for Battle Group no. 511 for the defense of Dir Mimas.

The Parliamentary Council

This council was formed after the elections of 2000 in order to improve the party's discipline and the functioning of the party faction in the Lebanese parliament. It includes all Hizballah members of the Lebanese parliament. On a number of occasions Nasrallah and other leaders of the organization have reiterated that membership in the Parliament does not free the MP of his party discipline and no Hizballah MP has the right to express views that are not accepted by the leadership.

Relations with Iran, Syria and Lebanon

Hizballah plays a pivotal role in the strategies of both Iran and Syria vis-à-vis Israel and the US. This role is first and foremost one of a strategic deterrent; a means to confront Israel and to create an option for terrorism abroad against Iran's enemies, without Iran having to take direct responsibility and bear the consequences.

Hizballah is dependent upon money and weapon supplies from Iran and Syria. The relations between Hizballah and its two patrons, though, are not equal. The support of Iran is a "necessary condition" for Hizballah's very existence and terrorist policy, but not a "sufficient condition". The "sufficient condition" has been provided by the Syrian willingness to serve as a conduit for Iranian (and its own) military support and a facilitator of Hizballah's independent status in Lebanon; were Syria to deny Hizballah freedom of action in Lebanon (at least during the period when the Syrian army was in Lebanon), it would not have been able to function openly as it did.

Iran

The relations between Iran and the Shiites of South Lebanon (Jabal 'Amel) go back to the Safavid era in Iran, when Shiite scholars were brought from Lebanon to introduce the new Shiite creed, which was declared in Iran. These activities gave birth to intricate relations between the Shiite religious elites of both countries that were expressed in transfer of religious knowledge studies of Lebanese Shiites in the schools of Qom and Mashhad, family links between scholarly dynasties and acceptance by some Lebanese Shiites of Iranian scholars as their "source of emulation" (*marja' taqlid*). These close relations were the source of constant cross-pollination of ideas between the two groups. Nevertheless, for most of the modern era, the Lebanese Shiite community maintained a closer affiliation with Najaf than with the Iranian schools, due to the sanctity of the former and its "Arab" rather than "Persian" nationality. The political status of the Iraqi Shiites was also more similar to that of the Shiites of Lebanon: a political minority – albeit a very large one – in a Sunni dominated state. The first Shiite political movement, which arose in Lebanon – Amal – while it was founded by a cleric of Iranian origin (Musa al-Sadr), was secular and focused on achieving equality for the Shiites in Lebanon and not on any extra-Lebanese agenda. While Iran has achieved a large degree of dominance among the Lebanese Shiites through Hizballah, these basic factors have not changed.

Hizballah therefore was the first step in mobilizing the relations between the Lebanese Shiites and Iran. It was founded as an extension of the Islamic Republic into Lebanon. The symbols, ideology and goals of the organization are dictated by Tehran and are for the most part identical with those of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. The commitment of Hizballah to the principle of *wilayat al-faqih* places the movement under complete control of the Iranian leader, who is not presented in this context as belonging to Iran, but as a transcendental spiritual guide.

The original cadres of Hizballah were indoctrinated by their mentors in the IRGC with the ideology of the Islamic Revolution and accepted Ayatollah Khomeini as their "model of emulation" (*marja' taqlid*) and it continues to receive from Iran both

ideological and practical guidance. There is virtually no major step taken by the organization, which is not coordinated with Iran.³⁶ Furthermore, during the 1990s Nasrallah served as Khamenei's personal representative (*wakil shar'i*) in Lebanon. Later, the title was shared with Sheikh Muhammad Yazbak, who deals with most of the religious activity that the position calls for (supporting Khamenei's claim as *marja'a taqlid*, collecting tithe for the schools in Qom affiliated with Khamenei), though Nasrallah has also kept the official title.

The Deciding Consultative Council of Hizballah includes as full members two senior Iranian representatives who sit on the Council *ex officio*. No less important is Hizballah's almost total dependence on Iran for its budget; the Iranian annual support of Hizballah was estimated at \$100 million though during the last year, it has gradually grown and is said to reach \$200 million. Other sources put the annual Iranian funding at approximately 1 billion dollars, with expenses on the military apparatus and the Resistance activities not included.³⁷

Iran sees Hizballah as playing more than one role. It is, at once:

1. A model for the Iranian doctrine of "export of Islamic Revolution" to Shiite communities elsewhere through the formation of an Islamic republic in Lebanon along the lines of that of Iran.
2. A proxy "frontline" organization in the struggle against Israel.
3. A "long arm", not only against Israel, but also against other enemies such as Iraq (during the Iraq-Iran War) and the West.
4. A direct foothold in Lebanon, within the heartland of the Arab Middle East.

The movement has however evolved over the years. For most intents and purposes, Hizballah is a proxy of Iran. However, it cannot be compared to other such organization, which are directed by mid-level intelligence officials in the Iranian regime and have little room of maneuver to express their own particular interests. Hizballah has evolved over the year to be a movement with a political, social and military agenda with deep roots within the Lebanese Shiite community.

The Iranian involvement in the operational planning of Hizballah however is extensive, though it differs from one type of activity to another. There is no doubt that Iran is deeply involved in all acts of terror or intelligence of the organization abroad. However, there are indications that in the Lebanese theatre the organization enjoys a high degree of autonomy. Once the strategy has been put down, Hizballah does not have to confer with Iran in order to launch attacks on Israel in the Shab'a area or attempt to abduct soldiers. Nevertheless, the close proximity of IRGC officers and their participation in the deliberations of the key institutions of Hizballah ensure coordination. Since Ahmadinejad was elected President, Iran has upgraded its

³⁶ For example, when Hizballah had to decide whether or not to join the Lebanese government after the Syrian withdrawal, Nasrallah consulted with the highest levels in Iran.

³⁷ Nizar Hamadeh, *In the Path of Hizballah*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004, p. 63.

contacts with Hizballah and senior figures in the regime have been charged with developing the Iranian interests vis-à-vis Lebanon.³⁸

The Iranian link is evident as well in the ideological writings that have been found in operations against Hizballah. These are almost all based on Iranian texts. In many cases, it is obvious that the source of the texts is documents originating in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).³⁹ The Iranian ideological indoctrination of Hizballah is coordinated by the Imam Khomeini Culture Center. The Center is based in Qom and headed by Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi. The Center published tracts, which are mainly aimed at religious indoctrination of the IRGC. The main Lebanese branch of the Center is situated in the south Beirut suburb of Harat Huriek. The pamphlets and books published by the Center are replete with the personality cult of Nasrallah and Khamene'i. The latter is described as "*wali*" (i.e. *wali faqih*). In some texts, though, Khamene'i is referred to as the "Leader of the Islamic Revolution" (*Qa'id al-Thawra al-Islamiyya*).

The Iranian control over Hizballah is implemented directly through Hasan Nasrallah. The links between Iran and Hizballah however are not restricted to the leadership level. They occur on the various organizational levels between Iranian officials from various branches of the Iranian government and Iranian apparatuses and their Hizballah counterparts. On the Iranian side, there is no one body, which can be said to have comprehensive responsibility for making decisions regarding Hizballah. The bodies involved in directing Hizballah include: IRGC; MOIS; the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Propagation. The contacts of these bodies with Hizballah frequently overlap and even contradict, reflecting the internal competition within the Iranian regime between the various bodies. The Iranian regime has set no clear schedule of authorities for the various apparatuses. A case in point is the activity of the cultural attaché in Beirut, which acted at once for MOIS, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Propagation. Obviously, the Supreme Leader and the Office of the Supreme Leader have the final say, leaning on the Supreme National Security Council.

The most important link between Iran and Hizballah is that with the IRGC. The IRGC link is maintained through the al-Qods (Jerusalem) Force. The al-Qods Force headquarters in Lebanon has responsibility to provide of arms, logistic support, training and operational guidance to Hizballah. The Force trains Hizballah operatives in its camps in Lebanon and sends them to advanced training in Iran. It also handles Hizballah's operational links with Palestinian organizations inside the West Bank and Gaza (support of the Palestinians) through a special body (number 1800). Until the war of summer 2006, it was believed that the al-Qods Force had direct responsibility for the long range rockets which Iran had supplied Hizballah. The events of the war have not proven that such a distinction existed – at least at the time of the war. It may

³⁸ Among the figures mentioned: the Minister of Defense Mustafa Mahmud Najjar (a former IRGC commander who served in Lebanon), the President's advisor Mohsen Dahkan who served as commander of the IRGC forces in Lebanon and the Ambassador in Damascus, Hasan Akhtari.

³⁹ See for example the booklet "al-Jihad" that was found in Maroun al-Ras in South Lebanon during the fighting in July 2006. Expert analysis of the booklet indicates that it was written originally as motivation material for IRGC troops and translated into Arabic for Hizballah.

well be that Iran was initially hesitant to give Hizballah direct control over its strategic arsenal, but later relinquished control to the top level of the organization.

The ideological and operational affinity between the IRGC and Hizballah is reflected even in the symbols of the two bodies.



Along with the IRGC/al-Qods Force, the MOIS maintains strong links to Hizballah inside Lebanon and in Iran. The main point of contact for MOIS in the Hizballah leadership was ‘Imad Moghniyya. The involvement of MOIS in Hizballah is apparently oriented towards creating an infrastructure abroad. MOIS also operates through Hizballah to recruit Palestinian and Arab targets.

A third Iranian government body which is deeply involved in the activities of Hizballah is the Ministry of Culture and Islamic propagation. The ministry operates through the Cultural Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Beirut, which serves as one of the most important overt representations of the Iranian regime in Lebanon. The head of the center is the former Iranian Cultural attaché in Beirut – Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Hashemi. Most of the overt employees of the Center are Lebanese Shiites. The Center is at the forefront of the Iranian effort in Lebanon to gain followers (*moqalidun* – Shiites who accept a certain cleric as their *marja’ taqlid*) for the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamene’i. The Center was involved in the struggle between Hizballah and Sheikh Fadlallah due to the refusal of the latter to recognize Khamene’i as the *marja’* of the Shiites outside of Iran. The Center collaborates with another Iranian institute with a branch in Lebanon – the Ahl al-Bayt Foundation.⁴⁰

Iran and Hizballah also maintain a number of academic institutions in Lebanon, which are reputed to serve as cover or facilitators for MOIS, including:

⁴⁰ Ahl al-Bayt - *Majma’-e jahani-ye ahl-e beit* – was headed until 1999 by Hoj. ‘Ali al-Taskhiri, then by ‘Ali Akbar Velayati, and since October 2002 by Sheikh Muhammad Mahdi Assefi. Its goal is to spread the “Ja’fari legal school among Sunnis on the basis that the Shi’a is not a separate sect of Islam but rather just another school (*madhhab*) of legal jurisprudence.

1. The Consultative Center for Studies and Documentation – a research and publishing institute founded in 1988 that focuses on promoting the Iranian strategic view of the Middle East and global affairs.
2. Center of Scientific Research and Middle East Strategic Studies - a branch of an Iranian center of the same name. The Center is staffed by members of Hizballah. It was founded in 1988 simultaneously in Tehran and Beirut. Since spring 2002 it publishes a quarterly in Arabic – *Iran wa-al-‘Arab* (Iran and the Arabs) – which is dedicated to promoting Iran’s status in the Arab world.
3. The Center for Strategic Studies, Research and Documentation (CSSRD) – the Center was founded in 1990 and is headed by Sayyid Hussein al-Musawi who is also the head of the Arab-Iranian Friendship Association. It publishes a periodical in Arabic – *Shu’un al-Awsat* (Middle Eastern Affairs) – which presents an Iranian viewpoint on the Israeli-Arab conflict, the Arab regional order, Iran and Turkey and international strategy.

Politically, the leaders of Hizballah make efforts to rebuff the claim that the organization acts according to the interests of Iran and not those of Lebanon and to present the organization as the “Lebanese resistance”.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the focus of Hizballah on Iran (as opposed to Lebanon) can be easily seen in the training manuals and ideological texts of the organization. In these texts, there is little or no reference to other communities in Lebanon and none to a commitment to the existing model of a multi-sectarian Lebanon. Throughout the 2005 electoral campaign, Hizballah spokesmen kept on stressing the need to create a Lebanese state based upon the unity of the Lebanese “nation” rather than sectarianism.

The total identification of Hizballah with the ideology it imports from Iran is also evident in the fact that the Secretary General of Hizballah, Hasan Nasrallah, follows the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khamene’i as his “model of emulation” (*marja’ taqlid*). This relationship calls for unquestioning acceptance by the follower of the rulings of his model of emulation. This relationship has particular relevance to the question of deterrence, since ultimately, decisions on cardinal issues – among them actions that may lead to war – cannot be taken without consultation with the highest spiritual authority.

On the practical level, the Iranian link is multifold:

1. The military and terrorist capability of Hizballah hinges almost totally on Iranian financial and military aid and direction.
2. Hizballah has acted in the past and will probably be willing to act in the future as a “sub-contractor” for Iranian terrorism against Israeli targets abroad. Israel therefore has always taken into account that the conflict with Hizballah may

⁴¹ Nasrallah: “Lebanon is my top priority. Show me one thing that Hizballah has done during the last 23 years for Iran! What has Iran achieved from its ‘political base’ in Lebanon.” In response to the claim that Hizballah is attempting to implement the Iranian Islamic Revolution: “True, what is the problem with that? I am not permitted to be a Shiite Muslim?” Similarly, when the Iranian Deputy Minister of Interior, Mohtashami-Pour, who played a pivotal role in founding Hizballah in 1982, boasted that Hizballah was the spiritual handiwork of Ayatollah Khomeini, Hizballah’s representative in Iran, Sheikh ‘Abdallah Safi al-Din, reformulated Mohtashami-Pour’s statement as meaning no more than that Hizballah’s relations with Iran are on the firm basis that the members of the organization “love and accept” the teachings of Ayatollah Khomeini (*Sharq*, August 21, 2006).

spill over from the Lebanese theatre into attacks on soft Israeli and Jewish targets abroad.

3. Hizballah's military capabilities vis-à-vis Israel have been built not only to deter Israel in the narrow context of the Israeli-Lebanese theatre, but to deter any Israeli or American attacks against Iran in the context of the nuclear conflict and to provide Iran with a capability to attack Israel despite the absence of a common border between the two states.

As Hizballah grew stronger, its value grew for Iran. The importance of Hizballah as the most successful Iranian proxy in the Muslim world and a major weapon of deterrence against Israel and the US determined the extent of risk that Iran was willing to take in order to maintain the organization's strength. The patron-proxy relationship between Iran and Hizballah evolved into an almost total identification of the two with each other. Israeli attempts to deter Hizballah had to relate, therefore, to the larger picture of possible Iranian reactions as well as pure Hizballah ones.

A major question in this context is the role of Hizballah in case of an attack on Iran's nuclear installation. Before the war of summer 2006, Iran clearly saw Hizballah as an important deterrent against both the US and Israel. Hizballah itself projected ambiguity regarding its possible involvement in case of an Israeli or US attack on Iran.⁴²

Syria

While Syria's relationship with Hizballah is not as intimate and strong as that of Iran, Syria has been, as pointed out above, the "sufficient condition" for Hizballah's military and terrorist capability in Lebanon. There is no doubt that without the Syrian support, Iran would find it extremely difficult to build up Hizballah's military strength in Lebanon. Syria's relationship with Hizballah is manifold:

1. A political supporter of Hizballah, who by defending Hizballah's acts as legitimate, takes implied responsibility.
2. A military supplier of Syrian arms directly to Hizballah (this aspect of Syrian involvement actually began with Bashar al-Asad, whereas his father was much more cautious in exposing Syrian support of Hizballah). It is noteworthy that in the war of July-August 2006, the lion's share of rockets launched at Israel was Syrian and not Iranian.
3. Facilitator of Iranian support in terms of training, free movement of Hizballah and IRGC personnel through Damascus, finances, transfer of military supplies, including long-range rockets.
4. The "landlord" of Lebanon, who determines the conditions by which the Lebanese government accepts Hizballah as an armed militia after all other militias, was disarmed.
5. The effective military power in Lebanon that coordinates with Hizballah its attacks on Israel, and therefore can prevent those attacks.

⁴² Nasrallah: "We all feel solidarity with Iran from the political, moral and popular aspects, since it is the attacked party. However, any discussion of a military response (to an attack on Iran) is premature. If I say "yes", we may not do anything and if I say 'no', I will calm Israel and the US without any reason."

6. Having an effective intelligence picture of Hizballah, so that even if Hizballah did not coordinate an action with Syria in advance, Damascus could know about it and put pressure on the organization to refrain, if it so willed.

The Syria-Hizballah relationship has evolved over the years with Syria losing much of its leverage over the organization as a result of a series of regional changes. The most relevant milestones in this process were:

1. The Israeli withdrawal in 1986 to the “Security Zone” – Hizballah then became the main tool in Syria’s arsenal for attacking Israeli forces. Syria’s support was critical to Hizballah and Iran for supplying Hizballah and maintaining the links between Hizballah and its mentors in the IRGC. During this period Syria was still ruled by Hafez al-Asad who did not tolerate any affront to the Syrian predominance in Lebanon. The Syrian military command in Lebanon demanded and received full transparency of Hizballah and Iran in return for facilitation of their activities.
2. The Taif Accords – the dismantling of all other militias in Lebanon left Hizballah as the only armed militia and strengthened it both vis-à-vis all other Lebanese parties (particularly Amal in the Shiite community and against the anti-Syrian groups). Syria played a pivotal role in achieving legitimization of this status for Hizballah as the “Lebanese resistance” against Israeli occupation and enjoyed the exclusive clout that the organization achieved as a result. However, the fact that Hizballah remained the only armed militia (except for the Palestinians in the refugee camps) enhanced its importance for Syria and gave it more room for maneuver, weakening the Syrian hold on it.
3. The Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000 – on the face of things, the withdrawal threatened the legitimacy of Hizballah’s status; if there was no Israeli occupation, there could be no justification for an armed “resistance” outside of the armed forces of the Lebanese state. Syria had a vested interest in preserving Hizballah’s right to resistance. Hence, it supported Hizballah’s claim that the Shab’a Farms area (occupied by Israel with the Golan Heights in June 1967) was part of Lebanon, and therefore Israel had not implemented a total withdrawal and the *raison d’être* of Hizballah’s resistance remained in force. Syria then even refused an Israeli offer to settle the dispute by declaring that the area is Lebanese and demanding Israeli withdrawal from it.⁴³
4. The death of President Hafez al-Asad and the ascendancy of his son Bashar al-Asad to power – the presidency of Bashar was arguably the most important event in Syria-Hizballah relations. Hafez al-Asad’s policy towards the organization – as towards other Lebanese factions – was to keep them at arms length and allowing the security bureaucracy to deal with them. Bashar got acquainted with Hasan Nasrallah when his father appointed him as responsible for the “Lebanese portfolio” and spent many hours of talks with him, during which he developed what seems to be an unabashed fascination with his personality and leadership. Various explanations for this admiration have been offered: a psychological need for a charismatic and authoritative role model in lieu of his father; an acute awareness of his own leadership deficiencies

⁴³ The offer was made during the deliberations with the UN over demarcation of the border. Private communication.

resulting in admiration of a man who has the very leadership traits that he lacks. When he rose to power, this admiration was expressed in Bashar's willingness to invite Nasrallah to the presidential palace and even to allow fighters of Hizballah to march on special occasions in al-Ladhaqiyya.⁴⁴

5. The "Cedar Revolution" or "Beirut Spring" which resulted in the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon (April 2005) – Syria's weakened position in Lebanon left it more dependent on - and hence more constrained to give backing to and less able to control – its Lebanese proxies – primarily Hizballah – whose room of maneuver vis-à-vis a weakened Damascus grew even more.
6. The Israel-Lebanon war of Summer 2006 – the events of this last conflict have strengthened Bashar's admiration of Hasan Nasrallah. Bashar's speeches increasingly bear the imprint of the arguments and rhetoric of Hizballah and Iran and Bashar's commitment to his alliance with Nasrallah has grown.

The Syrian withdrawal changed the Syrian-Iranian-Hizballah relationship profoundly. Iran encouraged Hizballah to support Syria inside Lebanon at the risk of endangering its relations with the other communities and political parties in the country. By doing so, Iran proved its value to Damascus as an ally that can "deliver" an important proxy at a time of Syria's most dire need. The very demonstration of support also proved to Syria that the balance of the bilateral relations with both Iran and Hizballah had changed. Syria's ability to facilitate Hizballah's activities in Lebanon – and hence the latter's dependence on Damascus - had been reduced by its withdrawal, whereas Syria had become more dependent on the good offices of Iran and Hizballah for the defense of its own critical interests in Lebanon. As a result, Syria's direct leverage over Hizballah's strategy and day-to-day behavior has diminished drastically. Whereas, in the past, Israel attempted to bring pressure to bear on Hizballah through its Syrian patron, today this has become more difficult. Having lost its overt presence in Lebanon, Syria cannot wield the same ham-pressure that it used to wield in Lebanon. Consequently, Israel has lost an important mode of indirect deterrence towards Hizballah due to Syria's loss of leverage in Lebanon.

The new balance in the Syria-Iran-Hizballah relationship was cemented in a series of meetings and accords between Damascus and Tehran since the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. In June 2006 the two countries signed a "Mutual Defense Pact" in which Iran promised Syria supply of technology and hardware in the areas of conventional and missile weaponry. The pact, according to various reports, also dealt with strengthening Lebanon's position as a front line defense against possible Israeli and US schemes against the two countries – particularly in case of a strike against Iran's nuclear facilities. Thus Hizballah strengthened its own position as a major component of its two patrons' deterrence policy.

The war of summer 2006 is another watershed event in the history of the Syria-Hizballah relationship. During the war there were indications that Nasrallah may have taken refuge in Damascus, though this cannot be verified. Syria supported Hizballah politically and militarily, raised its military alert level and stonewalled attempts to

⁴⁴ Nasrallah himself admitted at one time that he had never had a personal, face-to-face meeting with Hafez al-Asad, *O TV*, June 10, 2001.

recruit it to pressure on Hizballah. However, the limits to the support of Hizballah were clear. Hizballah, on the other side, made efforts to draw Syria into the conflict; it launched missiles into the Golan (some of which fell in Syrian territory), spread disinformation that Israel had bombed in the depth of Syrian territory, and made copious use of the Ra'ad 1 rockets that Syria had provided it. Syria, aware of the trap that Hizballah had set, immediately denied that Israel had attacked Syria and refrained from any action that might be deemed by Israel as provocative enough to elicit an Israeli retaliation against Syria. At the end of the day, the war strengthened Hizballah in the balance of its relationship with Syria; it had fought Israel and “defeated” the “invincible” Israeli army while the Syrian army had remained idle, Nasrallah’s picture is displayed in the markets of Damascus (albeit for the sake of political correctness and for the benefit of the *Mukhabarat* along with Bashar’s portrait) and he has become a national hero. The very fact that Syria has begun to speak in terms of forming a “resistance movement” (à la Hizballah) and even asking Hizballah to aid in training this movement indicates the degree of influence that Hizballah’s performance has had on Damascus.

Lebanon – the State and Communities

Hizballah evolved in the context of the Shiite community of Lebanon and therefore, however trans-national its ideology may be, it remains rooted in that community. In this sector however, Hizballah is not alone; it competes with the more veteran Amal organization, which has deep roots in the community.⁴⁵ The relations between the two organizations have been acrimonious in the past and even deteriorated in the 1980s and early 1990s into armed clashes. After the Taif Accords, however, Amal was demilitarized, placing it in an inferior position vis-à-vis Hizballah. Nevertheless, the very fact that Hizballah found it necessary to strike an alliance with Amal for parliamentary elections indicates that it is cognizant of the fact that Amal still holds a great deal of influence over its constituency.

Both Amal and Hizballah represent a rebellion against the traditional social order of the Shiites of Lebanon; one ruled by the hegemony of “leaders” (*zu'ama*) usually representing a handful of prominent families. The appearance of Imam Musa al-Sadr was, in essence, part of this rebellion. While the traditional families have not lost their status all together, the Shiite revolution in Lebanon has achieved its internal goal – overturning those families and bringing to the fore the new Shiite middle class and the clerical elite. This is exemplified in the diminishing representation of the old families in the Lebanese parliament and in public office. However, while the two movements share a social agenda of promoting the Shiite community, they differ as to the relative place of this agenda in their ideologies; whereas it is the predominant element in Amal’s political ideology, for Hizballah it ranks far behind the priority of “resistance” and jihad.

The attitude of Hizballah towards the Lebanese state has ostensibly evolved over the years. At first, the mainstream of Hizballah eagerly adopted Khomeini’s outright rejection of the legitimacy of a multi-confessional regime in a “Muslim” country such

⁴⁵ Amal’s roots are in Musa al-Sadr’s “Movement of the oppressed” (*Harakat al-Mahrumin*), which he founded in 1974, and which evolved into the Amal militia (*Afwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniyya*) during the Lebanese civil war.

as Lebanon, and his call to transform Lebanon into an Islamic state along the lines of Iran.

This has gradually changed – at least on the formal level – into an apparent acceptance of the existing order, albeit with modifications in favor of the Shiites as a community. The shift to a “Lebanese agenda” gave rise to the claim that Hizballah had gone through a process of “*labnana*” (Lebanonization) in which the Israeli issue had become secondary and the organization was preoccupied with its attempts to take over Lebanon democratically, to gain power among the Shiites at the expense of the Amal movement, and to challenge the state apparatuses. Hizballah entered Lebanese parliamentary politics for the first time in 1992, winning 12 out of 128 seats in parliament. In subsequent elections, it won 10 seats (1996), and 8 (2000) and in 2005 it won 14 seats within an alliance with Amal-Hizballah which took all 23 seats in Southern Lebanon and as part of a “Resistance and Development Bloc”, which won 27.3% of the seats. Hizballah also has succeeded in the municipal elections of 2005, winning about a fifth of the contested municipalities. After the Cedar Revolution, Hizballah even joined the July 2005 cabinet of Fouad Siniora, with two ministers.

The extent and depth – and particularly the honesty – of this “Lebanonization” (*labnana*) are a matter for debate among Lebanese and observers of Lebanon. Many see Hizballah’s acceptance of the existing order and willingness to participate in it (in parliament and government) as no more than Shiite dissimulation (*taqiyya*) and an effort to exploit the state to further Hizballah’s own – and Iran’s – goals – ultimately to turn Lebanon into an Islamic regime.

The attitude towards Lebanon has been a matter for internal debate within Hizballah since its inception. While the young leaders who were directly associated with Iran supported a militant attitude towards Lebanon, Sheikh Mohammad Fadlallah, who was considered the spiritual guide of many of those who recruited to the organization (see above) called for accommodation with the Lebanese state and proposed to leave the goal of an Islamic state in Lebanon as a “vision”. In the 1985 political platform of Hizballah, the final formula that was accepted stated that “Though Hizballah is committed to Islam, it will not impose it by force on Lebanon... if the people of Lebanon will be given the opportunity to freely choose their regime, they will choose the Islamic regime. Therefore we call for adoption of the Islamic regime by way of free choice and not by force.”⁴⁶

The Taif Accords of 1989 and the subsequent parliamentary elections of 1992 were a watershed in Hizballah’s attitude towards Lebanon. Hizballah realized at that time that it could no longer benefit from disengagement from Lebanese domestic politics and it requested a *fatwa* of Khamene’i regarding its participation in the parliamentary election. The *fatwa* in favor of participation was provided and Hizballah participated in the elections for the first time. The new attitude towards Lebanon was formalized in the 3^d conference of the organization in May 1993 and received further clarification in statements surrounding the 4th and 5th conferences in 1995 and 1998 respectively

⁴⁶ The Hizballah Political Platform 1985.

and in the secret 6th conference that was held in July 2001.⁴⁷ Since the “Cedar Revolution” of February-April 2005 which resulted in the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon (April 2005) and the election of the anti-Syrian coalition, Hizballah has doubled its efforts to project itself as a loyal Lebanese movement. This process that Hizballah underwent was authorized by the Iranian Supreme Leader – Ayatollah Khamene’i. The decision was based on the understanding that Hizballah had lost the Syrian presence in Lebanon and had to compensate for it by its own presence in the Lebanese executive, the main goal being to stave off pressure to disarm Hizballah.⁴⁸

Hizballah’s Lebanese agenda is also demonstrated in its extensive social system for the Shiite community. This social system provides health care and education that the Lebanese state cannot provide. In addition, Hizballah provides compensation for Shiites whose homes were destroyed in the conflict with Israel (according to Lebanese sources – \$12,000 per family).⁴⁹ This munificence is one of Hizballah’s main sources of influence among the Shiite community.

Hasan Nasrallah frequently alludes in his speeches to considerations of the particular *maslahah* of the Shiites in Lebanon and of Lebanon in general. This is reflected in his statements in August 2006 that had he assessed that there were even one percent possibility that Israel would respond as it did in the war (e.g. wide scale bombing of Lebanon), he would not have ordered the abduction of the Israeli soldiers that sparked the war. It is difficult to determine whether these protestations reflect a real self-critique or are intended to stave off the internal criticism in Lebanon that Hizballah has sacrificed the interests of Lebanon for those of Iran.

Hizballah’s protestations notwithstanding, many Sunnis and Christians in Lebanon see Hizballah’s projection of a nationalist Lebanese image as an expression of “Taqiyya” (Shiite dissimulation) in order to consolidate its position in Lebanon and not a fundamental element in the organization’s ideology. The Lebanese constraint has become even more acute since the confrontation with Israel in the summer of 2006. The Lebanese press accused Hizballah of acting on the part of Iran and Syria and being willing to sacrifice not only the interests of Lebanon *per se*, but of its own Shiite constituency for the sake of the interests of its two patrons.

⁴⁷ Nasrallah: “Hizballah is a movement whose members are Lebanese, whose leadership is Lebanese, and whose decisions are Lebanese and are taken by a Lebanese leadership. The movement struggles on Lebanese land for the honor and freedom of the Lebanese people and the entire nation. Hizballah is an Islamic Lebanese movement. Hizballah does not receive its decisions from the Iranian ambassador in Beirut. Regarding some of the decisions we take, the Iranian ambassador reads them in the newspaper.”

⁴⁸ Hizballah indoctrination texts emphasize the need that the program of action in jihad must be “restrained, subdued, and moral”. It must be based on interaction between the *mujahidin* and the public, treating the public with much sensitivity in order to avoid a twisted perception of the *mujahidin*, which may push the public away from the desire to take part in the jihad (pamphlet Jihad found in South Lebanon, pp. 57-58).

⁴⁹ The massive input of money from Hizballah to South Lebanon after the war of Summer 2006 was known in Lebanon as “al-Sayl al-Ahdar” (the green (dollars) flood).

A shield that the organization issued to commemorate the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon in May 2000 shows the Lebanese flag with the symbol of Hizballah instead of the Lebanese cedar.



The crisis that came in the wake of the fighting of summer 2006 has highlighted the fragile relations between Hizballah and the Lebanese state. The primary objective of Hizballah in this crisis was to prevent any initiative for disarmament of its forces. To achieve that objective it used both “popular” pressure (mass demonstrations of Shiites and other pro-Syrian factions), parliamentary procedures (resignation of Hizballah ministers from the cabinet), and targeted killings of cabinet ministers (the assassination of Pierre Gemayel and the attempted assassination of Minister Michel Pharaon – both on November 21, 2006) in order to create a constitutional crisis that would force Prime Minister Siniora to resign (according to the Lebanese constitution, the cabinet needs a legal quorum of two thirds of its members) to hold meetings. The confrontation between Hizballah and the Lebanese government (in essence – with the Sunni, Druze and Christian communities) in May 2008 was one more step on the part of the organization to consolidate its hold in the state. The Doha Agreement which put an end to the crisis formalized Hizballah’s veto on key issues on the Lebanese agenda and put an end to the efforts to disarm the organization. It appears that the conventional wisdom in Lebanon that the next American administration will open a dialog with Iran and Syria was a key motivation for the renewal of dialog between Hizballah and its Lebanese opponents.

Military Doctrine and Terrorist Modus Operandi

General Elements

Hizballah's strategy in the conflict with Israel in Lebanon was directed not only to achieving a military achievement – withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon – but to creating a credible deterrent threat which would reduce Israel's options for action against the organization.

Despite the image it projects as an egalitarian guerilla army, Hizballah's indoctrination stresses the religious duty of organization and discipline as an essential element of jihad. This is because⁵⁰:

1. Maintaining military hierarchy is a "religious duty". The division into ranks does not contradict the brotherhood among the military personnel, since they are all equal members of the "Army of Islam".
2. Lack of strict order and discipline causes unnecessary bloodshed (among the *mujahidin*). The blood of the *mujahidin* should be saved for battle and for martyrdom in battle.
3. The ever-changing reality calls for a "continuous adaptation of the organizational structure" in order to meet constantly changing military demands.

Hizballah's doctrine of "asymmetric warfare" has been characterized by constant low-intensity warfare against Israeli troops – first in Lebanon and now in the disputed Shab'a area. It would however be incorrect to characterize the Hizballah military doctrine as a classic guerilla doctrine. The number of forces which take part in the attacks, their level of training and armament, the level of tactical coordination that it demonstrates in the course of attacks and the very existence of massive fortifications in Southern Lebanon are all hallmarks of the organization's military doctrine and liken it more to "special forces" units of regular Western armies than to an underground resistance organization.

Command and Control

The Hizballah system for command and control is efficient and streamlined. On one hand, the local command structure on the line of contact has wide authority for execution of military activities against Israel within the constraints set by the higher political and military leadership. On the other hand, there is a high level of discipline and capability of the higher command level to direct the lower echelons. This level of discipline was exemplified in the latest confrontation when Hizballah accepted a 48 hour cease fire and succeeded in implementing it, renewing massive fire at the moment it was over.

Hizballah controls its units via regional headquarters that enjoy relative autonomy after the strategic decision on a military operation has been taken. The central control

⁵⁰ *Al-Jihad* (Pamphlet found in South Lebanon), The Imam Khomeini Cultural Center, Harat Huriek, Beirut, pp. 21-23.

of the leadership is facilitated by full-scale C4 systems supplied by Iran. From this point of view, Hizballah is more like a regular army than like a terrorist organization. However, its unique situation as a regular army, which deals solely in “special operations” and guerilla, has created a command and control structure, which is both hierarchal and provides a high level of autonomy. The central command of the short, medium and long range rockets – all deemed by Hizballah as its strategic weapon – was exemplified in the summer of 2006, when an agreement was reached on a ceasefire of twenty-four hours for humanitarian supplies; Hizballah ceased all fire completely and renewed it with a barrage of 250 rockets the moment the ceasefire was over.

The logistic and operational autonomy of the regional and sub-regional units is a lesson that Hizballah learned from Israel’s first wide-scale operation against the organization (“Accountability”) in 1993, in which Israeli attacks on headquarters and central depots succeeded in eroding Hizballah’s firepower. At the same time, Hizballah’s Jihad Council has the ability to mobilize troops, to move them from one area to another and to concentrate rocket fire on one target inside Israel. The Jihad Council also has direct command over “special units” which have been involved in what the organization dubs “quality operations” such as infiltration into Israel and kidnapping soldiers.

Another important element of Hizballah’s command and control is the high level of compartmentalization of the organization. Hizballah had before the war more than six hundred bunkers south of the Litani River. The military units of Hizballah were organized in extremely small and localized units, so that no single commander in the field knew more than necessary about the bunkers serving his own units. Each unit was assigned to three bunkers at the most.

This system of Hizballah is effective mainly because the organization operates as a militia in defined areas. Units from one part of the country are not mobilized to fight in territory unknown to them, since each area has “reserve” units of the militia – less trained than the regular backbone of the Hizballah fighters but capable of reinforcing the units in their own area.

A major part of the Hizballah command and control is based on the infrastructure of the Iranian Embassy in Beirut. The Embassy provides Hizballah with sophisticated communication technology, ciphers, strategic and tactical intelligence and secure communication for the leadership.

ORBAT

The number of members of Hizballah can be estimated at 20,000 “hard core” members and tens of thousands of less committed ones. The number of Lebanese Shiites who are affiliated with Hizballah in one way or another or have some commitment to the organizations is much larger and encompasses the lion’s share of the Shiite population.

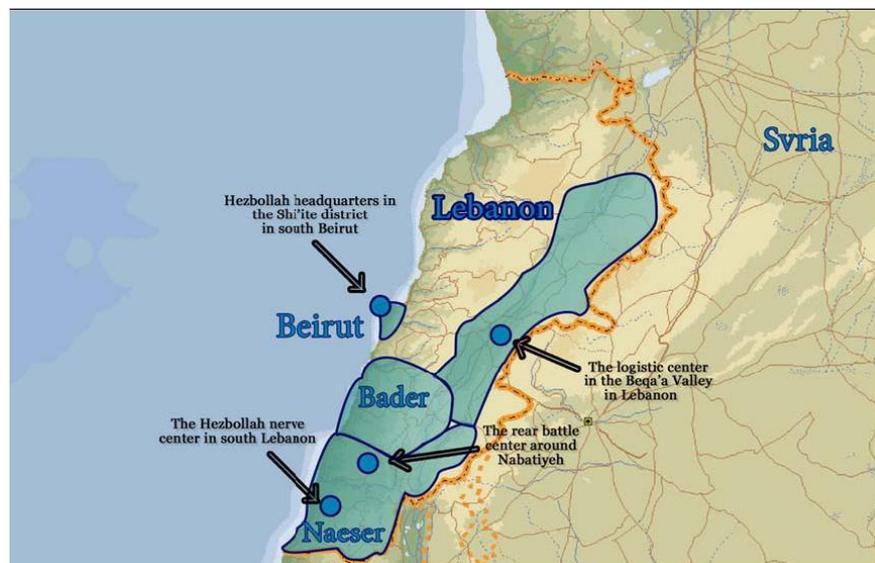
The IDF Military Intelligence estimates the number of Hizballah casualties during the war at some 650 killed (450 identified with certainty as regular Hizballah activists) and over 800 injured. More than three quarters of these belonged to the Nasr Brigade

and hailed from the villages of South Lebanon. Hizballah and the Lebanese government made efforts to obfuscate the scale of the organization's losses by making no distinction in official statistics between Hizballah operatives and civilians. According to information issued by the Lebanese government and media, 1084 civilians and 40 members of the military and the gendarmerie were killed in the war, and at least 3700 people were injured. No mention whatsoever is made of Hizballah fighters, therefore, the Hizballah losses appear within the Lebanese statistics of civilians. Hizballah admitted publicly to between 100-200 dead (There is a discrepancy between the statement by Ahmad Malli, of the Political Bureau (August 17) that no more than 100 were killed, and that of the Shahid Foundation (September 16) that there were 200 fatalities.⁵¹

The Hizballah military force is composed of three main branches: The "Islamic Resistance" (*al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya*); the Party Security (*Amn al-Hizb*) and the apparatus for terrorism outside of Lebanon – the External Security (*al-Amn al-Khariji*).

The Islamic Resistance

Hizballah's military command and control is based on four distinct territorial sectors: the strategic headquarters and "nerve center" in Harat Huriek in the Dahiya area of southern Beirut (though elements may have been transferred from there during the fighting and may not have returned yet); the "frontline" operational command of the Nasr Brigade south of the Litani, where most of the short range rocketry is concentrated; the "operational depth" composed of the Badr Brigade centered in the Nabatiyya area (north of the Litani), where the medium and long range missiles are held (and from where they can still hit deep into Israel); and the training and logistics centers in the Beqaa,



⁵¹ Alastair Crooke, a former MI6 officer who is sympathetic to Hizballah and frequently serves as a conduit for the organization's version of reality, claims that Hizballah lost 180 men – exactly the same number of Israelis killed during the fighting. See Alastair Crooke and Mark Perry, "How Hizballah defeated Israel" http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/HJ12Ak01.html.

The estimated military strength of the “Islamic Resistance Forces” before the fighting of summer 2006 was approximately 3000-5000 trained troops. It is estimated that about 1000 served in the Nasr Brigade near the border and these were reinforced during the fighting by some 3000 activists from the Badr region. In addition, the organization has at its disposal 7000-8000 partially trained “reserve” militia forces.

The basic unit of the Islamic Resistance is the “fighting squad” (*majmu'a qitaliyya*). These are usually not full time militants but locals who belong to the organization, train on a regular basis, but go about their regular lives until they are called upon. A number of squads are organized in a “battle group” (*tashkil qitali*), which is formed ad hoc for the specific mission. The battle groups are numbered (e.g. 511, 512, 513) and the squads are numbered within the groups. When no specific mission is foreseen, the squads are under the command of sector commanders who are linked together in the regional command.

The Party Security

The Party Security apparatus is a secret apparatus, which is not apparent even to most of the members of the organization. Its main function is to serve as a “field security” apparatus to prevent enemy intelligence from penetrating the ranks of the organization. The apparatus performs background checks on individuals and external bodies, which approach the organization. The apparatus interviews members of the organization which are expected to give a regular report on their relations with others, suspicious activities of their fellows etc.

The “External Security” Jihad Apparatus

The “External Security”, is one of the most pervasive and well-organized bodies of the organization and probably the closest to direct control of the Iranian intelligence. The former head of the apparatus, 'Imad Moghniyya, used to move constantly between Lebanon and Tehran. Since his death there is no clear picture regarding the apparatus. There is also no credible information regarding the size of this apparatus. Hizballah takes pains to deny that the organization has been involved in attacks outside of Lebanon either on its own behalf or on behalf of Iran or that the organization has an “external apparatus” and challenges anyone to bring “proofs” of such complicity. The arrest of Hizballah activists for smuggling Katyusha rockets into Jordan has been explained by Nasrallah as part of Hizballah's support of the Palestinians, and not “external activities” and even as proof that Hizballah has no infrastructure outside of Lebanon; had it had such a network, it would not have had to send activists to Lebanon to smuggle the rockets.⁵²

This apparatus is responsible for all operations of Hizballah outside of Lebanon. All information leads to the conclusion that Hizballah operations outside of Lebanon are planned, authorized and directed by Iran. The attacks that have been attributed to Hizballah outside of the Middle East were based on the prior existence of an extensive

⁵² Al-Intiqad, July 6, 2001.

infrastructure in the region in which the attack took place: networks of “sleeper” agents, safe houses, access to explosives and weapons, means to create cover, etc. These, of course, were all augmented by the Iranian assets in place. While Hizballah has not carried out attacks abroad since the early 1990’s, there has been abundant information that the External Security apparatus continues to build an operational infrastructure, which can be activated in time of need.

Hizballah has not – and probably would not – carry out a terrorist attack outside of the Middle East without total coordination with Iran. Moghniyya was, in essence, a “terrorist sub-contractor” for either of the two main Iranian organizations with a mandate for terrorism abroad: the IRGC and MOIS. While Hizballah’s main relationship with Iran is with the IRGC, much information links Moghniyya personally to elements within MOIS⁵³ and directly to the Office of the Supreme Leader. Moghniyya also received full logistic support of other Iranian institutions for his operations. Moghniyya’s position with both IRGC and MOIS, in any case, was not of a second level head of an apparatus of a proxy organization, but rather almost as a full-fledged Iranian apparatus. Since his death, it is possible that the functions that he held have been split and parts of the apparatus have come over more direct Iranian control.

It is not clear how much Nasrallah – or other members of the DCC – are in the know of all the activities and infrastructure of the External Security abroad. The relationship between Iran and Hizballah allows the former to bypass the latter’s leadership and to use the organization’s assets directly.

Training

Hizballah provides to the Shiite population low-price or free elementary and secondary schools and agricultural centers that provide farmers with technical assistance and training. These centers also serve as recruitment centers for the organization. The “Education Unit” of the Executive Council coordinates the educational system. It includes two major networks: the “al-Imam al-Mahdi” schools which operate in most of Lebanon and the “al-Mustafa” schools which are situated only in the Beirut area. The Hizballah educational system also includes a number of secondary schools for technical education such as al-Sayyid ‘Abbas al-Musawi Technical Institute and the Prophet Technical Institute.

Hizballah performs basic training of its activists in training camps in the Beqaa Valley, supervised by IRGC personnel in Lebanon. The body, which is responsible for recruitment and basic training, is the “Recruitment Unit” of the “Islamic Resistance”. The unit organizes the recruits, provides ideological indoctrination and training in light arms, first aid and basic infantry skills. After the basic training, the recruit is assigned to one of four units: the “suicide fighters” (*istashhadiyyun* or *mustashhidin*); Special Forces/Commando (the main body of well trained troops); rocket launchers (including anti-aircraft missiles, Katyusha, Fajr and Zilzal rockets); regular infantry.

⁵³ The link to MOIS arises from the evidence regarding the two attacks in Buenos Aires, which points at involvement of both ‘Imad Moghniyya and the Minister of MOIS, Ali Falahian.

In addition, the organization dispatches personnel for advanced training in Iran.

Military Modus Operandi

The typical Hizballah operation against Israel in southern Lebanon until the May 2000 withdrawal was based on the following:

1. High emphasis on disinformation, camouflage and surprise.
2. High level of tactical coordination combined with a low imprint and decentralization of the organization's C4 system (use of physical communication within South Lebanon).⁵⁴
3. High level of tactical intelligence thanks to the close proximity to Israeli forces and after the withdrawal to the border fence.
4. Massive fortification of positions in South Lebanon against Israeli AF strikes, in order to force Israel to engage the Hizballah fighters on the ground.
5. Positioning fighters and rockets within civilian population and use of that population as human shields.⁵⁵
6. High redundancy of weapons to counter-act Israel's ability to cut off the South from supply routes in Syria and the Beqaa Valley.
7. Coordinated attacks based on IED attacks complemented by ambushes of Israeli infantry and mechanized patrols and coordinated artillery and rocket fire across a given sector by a number of teams.
8. High level of Psyop by documentation of the attacks and use of the videos in its propaganda.
9. It is noteworthy that during this period the organization did not launch any suicide attacks. Indeed, Hizballah doctrine, while it extols the virtues of martyrdom, preserves such actions to those cases where there are no other options to attack a given target.

The advanced command and control that Hizballah created in South Lebanon (as manifested in the modern command and control infrastructure found in Bint Jbeil) allowed for both rigid control from the higher level of the leadership (for example when it wished to maintain a ceasefire or to concentrate fire on a specific area) and for considerable freedom of operation in the regular tactical operations. It seems that the operational rationale behind this duality was that the local forces were seen in the context of two missions: a strategic threat on Israel by launching of short range rockets across the border; and a tactical mission of delaying the advance of Israeli ground troops through small contingents and guerilla-type action in case of a ground invasion. While the first mission called for strict control from above, the Hizballah military command did not see a need to maintain complete control over a multitude of local confrontations between its forces and the IDF.

⁵⁴ The Hizballah Modus operandi was based on forming a forward command post, manning forward observation posts by senior commanders of the organization, and employing artillery to support the attack. The Hizballah teams were specialized (mining, explosive devices, anti-tank, etc.).

⁵⁵ During the fighting in July 2006, Israel dropped fliers calling on the civilians to leave. Hizballah fighters prevented Shiites from leaving their homes (with success mainly in the main Hizballah dominated villages), thus using them as human shields.

Intelligence

During the fighting of summer 2006, Hizballah demonstrated a relatively high level of tactical intelligence. These capabilities are based on the organization's own VISINT from permanent bases along the Israeli border, tactical SIGINT provided by Iran and Syria (apparently with the help of Hebrew speaking Palestinians), and raw and processed intelligence provided by third parties – mainly Syria and Iran, but also (in the past at least) the UN forces and France.

Hizballah's SIGINT capabilities are tactical. There is no evidence that Hizballah owns an independent strategic SIGINT capability. The organization has a proven ability to listen in to Israeli HF/VHF communication and the Israeli cellular phone network, thus exploiting the propensity of Israelis (regular soldiers and reservists alike) to "phone home" while they are in the field, ignoring field security regulations.

Hizballah has claimed over the years to have exposed Israeli spy rings without having publicized that fact and "turned" the spies, thus feeding disinformation into Israeli intelligence. These claims are widely exaggerated and should be seen as part of the Hizballah Psyop effort.

Use of Media and Psyop

Hizballah placed great emphasis on the use of media and Psyop both in the struggle against Israel and in its domestic agenda vis-à-vis the Shiites of Lebanon and other communities. The "Information Committee" of the "Executive Council" coordinates the Hizballah media network centrally. It includes *al-Manar* Television (broadcasting in Lebanon since 1991 and is transmitted by satellite to much of the Middle East and Europe), four radio stations (al-Nour, al-Iman, al-Islam, *Sawt al-Mustad'afin*) and five newspapers (*al-'Ahd/al-Intiqad*, *al-Bilad*, *al-Montalaq*, *al-Sabil*). This network is far more extensive than any similar network of any other community or political party in Lebanon.

Hizballah uses its broadcasts, and especially al-Manar, as a major weapon in its psyop campaign against Israel. All attacks are filmed from the beginning (even during the intelligence collection phase) and the tapes are distributed to world networks after the attack in order to weaken the confidence of the Israeli public in the IDF.

Hizballah makes prolific use of its TV station "al-Manar", which broadcasts by satellite to the rest of the Middle East and to Europe. Al-Manar was founded in 1991 with a budget of 1 million dollars and operates today with a budget of 15 million dollars – most of which comes from Iran.⁵⁶ Al-Manar serves not only the needs of Hizballah (aggrandizement of Nasrallah and reporting on the attacks of the organization on Israel) but it frequently provides immediate reporting on attacks by pro-Iranian Palestinian groups (Hamas, PIJ) inside Israel and is the first to publish their announcements of responsibility for those attacks. A number of instances have been registered in which al-Manar divulged details of the attack even before Israeli

⁵⁶ Avi Jorisch, *Beacon of Hatred: Inside Hezbollah's al-Manar Television*, (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2004), p. 32.

authorities released them. This seems to indicate a close operational link between those organizations and Hizballah, in which the former provide Hizballah with operational details of the attacks and instructions to release them after they are carried out. In addition to al-Manar, Hizballah makes full use of al-Jazeera TV station; most of Nasrallah's speeches during the war of summer 2006 were given exclusively to this station.

Public declarations and televised speeches by the leader of Hizballah, Hasan Nasrallah played an important role in the organization's attempts to project deterrence. Nasrallah reiterated in his speeches that the Israeli public "knows that he speaks the truth" and that his threats should be taken seriously. Towards the end of fighting in the summer of 2006, the oblique references to balanced retaliation became clearer; Nasrallah attempted to deter Israel from hitting Beirut by declaring publicly (in a prime-time televised speech) that "if Israel bombs our capital, Beirut, we will bomb your capital (sic) Tel Aviv". Since the end of the war, Hizballah has continued to use public statements to create the impression that it remained with most of its firepower.

Hizballah's Military Strategy

During the two and a half decades of conflict, Hizballah has acted against Israel in four main circles:

1. Intermittent low-intensity warfare against the Israeli forces in Lebanon until May 2000 and against Israeli military targets across the border (mainly in the area known in Arabic as the Shab'a Farms and in Hebrew as Mt. Dov) since then. This threat is characterized by a high level of coordination and a central military command with a high level of command and control.
2. Planning of terrorist attacks inside Israel through operatives recruited abroad and infiltrated into Israel and terrorist attacks from the West Bank and Gaza (mainly since the outbreak of the second Intifada) acting through Iranian-Palestinian proxy organizations, through Palestinians recruited directly by Hizballah and even through recruitment of Israeli Arabs.
3. Terrorist attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets abroad (primarily in Western Europe, South America and South-East Asia).
4. The existence of a large array of rockets and missiles with a strike capability of hitting most of Northern Israel, which serves as a deterrence against Israeli attempts to punish Hizballah for any of the above activities and as an option for use at the behest of Iran if Israel or the US attacks it.

Hizballah's assessment of Israel

Hizballah's perception of Israel's military capabilities was never flawed. Material collected in various skirmishes and in the war of 2006 show that the organization had a high level of intelligence on Israel. An analysis of the events of summer 2006 indicate that the flaw did not derive from Hizballah's misreading of Israeli deterrent signals, but rather from the fact that Israel had not been clear in sending those signals. Israel had not drawn any "red line" since May 2000–July 2006 (did you mean May 2000-July 2006?) and at the same time had allowed those it had drawn to fade.

Hizballah's analysis of Israel included the following components:

1. The Israeli Air Force has precision weaponry and will be employed in the opening stage of any attack to decapitate the leadership. This can be neutralized by building reinforced bunkers and hiding place for the leadership in advance.
2. Israel is an open society and it will be impossible for Israel to achieve strategic surprise in a blow against Hizballah.
3. The Israeli army is a regular army reinforced by reserves. In any case, mobilization and movement of forces to the Lebanese theatre will take time, which can be used by Hizballah to strike Israel's population centers.⁵⁷

Hizballah had no doubt throughout the conflict with Israel that the latter has superior force, which could – if used – cause intolerable damage to Hizballah and to

⁵⁷ Based on documents found in South Lebanon during the 2006 war.

Lebanon. However, Hizballah deduced from long years of conflict with Israel that the latter's use of its power was constrained by four main factors:

1. Domestic – Hizballah holds on to an ideologically biased reading of Israeli society⁵⁸ - Nasrallah's "cobweb theory" of Israeli society, according to which the Israeli leadership was aware of the low resilience of the populace to sustained attacks on the home front, and hence would refrain from military actions that may risk precipitating such attacks by Hizballah.
2. Military – Hizballah believed that the Palestinian Intifada in October 2000 would preclude Israel from opening an additional front and reduce the appetite of Israel's leaders for retaliation against Hizballah.
3. Foreign affairs – Israel was perceived as firmly controlled by the US. Hence, Israel would not allow itself to become embroiled in another "Lebanon War" unless the timing and the circumstances were desirable to Washington. In a round-about way, it was believed that the US involvement in Iraq would restrain Israel from deep military involvement in Lebanon.
4. Humane – Hizballah is aware of Israeli constraints in causing civilian casualties and took that into account in its deployment in the villages of South Lebanon and in the integration of military and civilian elements in its headquarters in Beirut.

A recurrent motif in Nasrallah's speeches is the description of the Israeli leadership as "confused", while Hizballah's acts were aimed at increasing this confusion no less than they were meant to achieve any military goal.⁵⁹ According to Nasrallah, the organization planned the abduction (and subsequent killing) of the three soldiers in October 2000 on the basis of a sound assessment that Israel, "defeated" after its withdrawal would not carry out its threats to retaliate.⁶⁰ Nasrallah has frequently referred to the fact that the Israeli media "knows that I tell the truth" when threatening Israel and uses this image to intensify his own deterrent image. In the same vein, he makes frequent use of the motif of promising a "surprise" and warning that Hizballah has capabilities that Israel does not know about.⁶¹

The history of the conflict between Israel and Hizballah shows that until that war, Hizballah was deterred in two areas:

1. In respect to the territory it deemed to be the theatre of conflict tolerated by Israel – prior to the Israeli withdrawal – South Lebanon – and since the withdrawal in the Shab'a farm area. The very choice of the Shab'a Farms area reflected Hizballah's analysis of what Israel would – and would not – tolerate. As mentioned above, during the demarcation of the border by the UN, Hizballah raised a series of

⁵⁸ Made public in a speech in Bint Jbeil (May 25, 2000).

⁵⁹ Examples of the image of Israel as "confused": Deputy SG of Hizballah, Na'im Qassem after an Israeli APC was hit by a IED in Lebanon (October 17, 1995): "Israel will not retaliate because it is in a state of confusion"; Hizballah analysis after an AT missile attack on February 16, 2001 (*al-'Ahd*, February 23, 2001, *al-Intiqad*, July 6, 2001; in the wake of the attack in Kibbutz Metzuba (March 12, 2002) (*al-Intiqad*, March 15, 2002, *al-Intiqad*, March 29, 2002).

⁶⁰ *Al-Intiqad*, August 1, 2003.

⁶¹ For example the mini-RPV that infiltrated Israeli airspace in November 2004.

reservations regarding other points along the border, which have been part of Israel since the era of the British Mandate. These were backed by Syria and even incorporated in Lebanon's official response to the UN committee. However, despite the fact that those points were not fundamentally different to Shaba, Hizballah refrained from operations in those areas. This restraint was the direct consequence of Hizballah's assessment that attacks in those areas would be perceived by Israel as attacks on sovereign Israeli territory and would provoke a harsher response. The question remains, is Hizballah going to raise these points again after a possible Israeli withdrawal from the Shab'a Farms?

2. In respect to the types of weaponry employed – Hizballah refrained from using its “strategic weapons” (medium and long range rockets) across the border. This too was the consequence of its recognition of “red lines”. The leaders of Hizballah and Iran assessed that regular or massive use of such rockets would serve as a casus belli for Israel. The Hizballah restraint however was linked to its own deterrent posturing. The possibility of massive rocket fire on population centers in the depth of Israel was meant to serve as a deterrent to prevent Israel from attacking Hizballah headquarters or strategic targets of the organization deep in Lebanon.

It is clear that Israel refrained from presenting a clear deterrent message to Hizballah. From the above we may reach the conclusion that **Hizballah was not deterred from attempting to abduct Israeli soldiers in July 2006 because Israel had taken no steps – declaratory or in the field – to deter it.** Hizballah's assessment was based on the following:

1. The area of the planned abduction of soldiers was in the territory in which Israel had tolerated Hizballah action in the past and had reacted moderately.
2. The action itself was not extraordinary; Hizballah had abducted three Israeli soldiers in October 2000 and an Israeli citizen abroad without having provoked a severe Israeli retaliation. Furthermore, there had been additional attempts by the organization to abduct Israelis that Israel had not reacted too harshly.
3. The Olmert government was perceived as having inherited the policies of Ariel Sharon's government. Hizballah had no reason to assume that the Olmert-Peretz team would react differently than their predecessors to such an attack. It is possible that Hizballah assessed that the new government, having campaigned on a dovish platform, would be averse to opening a new front in the North.

It has been argued that the fact that Israel retaliated with force in Gaza to the abduction of an Israeli soldier should have alerted Hizballah to such a contingency. However, by the same token, Hizballah may have taken into account that the Israeli reaction in Gaza derived from the government's need to justify the further unilateral disengagement in the West Bank and, in any case, the Palestinians lacked the deterrent weapons that Hizballah threatened to use. Israel had not used the Gaza precedent to warn any other enemies and therefore, rightly, Hizballah did not see it as a possible consideration to refrain from action.

The question of deterrence of Hizballah must address the lessons that Hizballah itself has learned from the last round. Nasrallah has publicly expressed his assessment that Israel will not renew the war due to domestic consideration. Nevertheless, the fact that Nasrallah has declared that he “retains the right” to launch attacks against Israel in the Shab’a Farm area, however, will refrain from doing so at the present time, seems to indicate that he realized that at the present time, he cannot return to the former rules of the game.

The Lebanese Theatre

The main threat posed by Hizballah to Israel is in the Lebanese theatre. This threat is both a day-to-day threat towards Israeli military forces along the border – particularly in the Shab’a Farms area – and a potential threat of medium, short and long-range rockets that can hit Israel’s main population centers.

The Hizballah threat, which Israel has endeavored to deter in the Lebanese context, has evolved over the years. The main periods in the development of the threat, which will be discussed below, are:

1. The period between the founding of Hizballah in 1982 and the Israeli withdrawal to the “Security Zone” in 1986.
2. The period of the existence of the “Security Zone” between 1986 and May 2000. During this period, two major milestones were the “Judgment and Accounting” operation (July 1993), the “Grapes of Wrath” operation (April 1996).
3. The period between the Israeli withdrawal from the “Security Zone” in May 2000 and the second Lebanon war of July-August 2006. This period includes an important watershed – the withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon.
4. The period that is now taking shape after the ceasefire of August 2006.

During most of this period, Hizballah's strategy in the Lebanese theatre leaned on two pillars:

1. The fact that Hizballah bears no responsibility as a state actor, transparency or accountability and Lebanon bears no accountability for the actions of Hizballah.
2. The image of Hizballah as possessing an extraordinary deterrence capability, both as an invisible army, an immeasurable power too risky to deal with on the ground in South Lebanon, and as possessor of a strike capability which can threaten Israel's home front.

The Israeli withdrawal of May 2000 presented Hizballah with a dilemma:

1. On one hand, to refrain from military actions on the border would be perceived as acceptance of Israel’s deterrence and would undermine Hizballah’s *raison d’être* as a “resistance” force. Hizballah’s leadership and Iran could not countenance any downgrading of Hizballah’s military capability; as such a development would impinge on Iran’s deterrence posture towards Israel and the US and leave the Palestinians the only element fighting Israel.

2. On the other hand, Hizballah could not risk triggering an Israeli response of full-scale bombing and/or invasion of Lebanon that would put paid to the attempts to rebuild the Shiite south and undermine its achievement as the victorious resistance that pushed Israel out of Lebanon.

The solution of this dilemma was to draw up new game rules based on the pretext of “occupied Lebanese territory” (the Shab’a Farms)⁶² and “Lebanese prisoners” (Samir al-Quntar and Lebanese drug dealers who were caught by Israel and sentenced) to justify its continued military actions against Israel and its legitimacy as an armed militia in Lebanon.

Since the Israeli withdrawal in May 2000, Hizballah attacks had been usually restricted to the Shab’a area.⁶³ Hizballah defined this restriction as deriving from its own choice and the rules that it had set down, while it reserved the “right” to attack Israel along the border.⁶⁴ It believed that Israel’s threat of “high-intensity deterrence”

⁶² Claims raised by Hizballah regarding “occupied Lebanese” lands in addition to the Shab’a Farms, which could potentially be raised to justify continued “resistance” include:

1. Territory in the tri-border area (12 square kilometers) where the Lebanese, Syrian and Israeli frontiers meet. The two main claims in this area are the village of Ghajar (two-thirds inside Lebanon and the rest in Israeli hands), Abbasiyye, situated 2 kilometers to the east of Ghajar, which was abandoned by its inhabitants in 1967. Part of the original village area is on the Lebanese side of the Blue Line and the rest in Israeli hands. Nasrallah has mentioned Abbasiyye in a number of speeches. Another village Nkhaile, is situated 2 kilometers south-east of Abbasiyye. Hizballah has declared that the question of Nkhaile will be raised after “the liberation of the Shab’a Farms”.
2. The “Seven Villages”, whose residents became Lebanese following the creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920 but ended up in the Palestine Mandate four years later as part of an agreement between Britain and France on demarcating Palestine’s northern frontier with Lebanon and Syria. The inhabitants of these villages fled Israel in 1948 and were naturalized in Lebanon. Hizballah views these villages as “occupied Lebanese territory” and the Lebanese government accordingly has declared that the return of that territory is a prerequisite for peace.
3. Properties on the Israeli side of the border (belonging to border villages, such as Houla and Mais al-Jabal), which were included in the Palestine Mandate in 1923. These include the Israeli Kibbutz Manara.
4. Deviations in the Blue Line from the original 1923 boundary in three places: south of Rmaish, at Addayse (near Kibbutz Misgav Am) and between Metulla and the Hasbani bridge. Nasrallah has referred to the discrepancy at Addayse.
5. A strip of land some 100 meters deep running east of Metulla for about 4.5 kilometers. The Lebanese authorities claimed that this area had been erroneously incorporated into Israel during the demarcation of 2000.

See: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/lebanon/2001/1210mistura.htm>.

⁶³ There were some exceptions. The most salient of them included:

1. A cross border attack near Kibbutz Metzuba in which six Israelis were killed (March 12, 2002). The Al-Aqsa Brigades of Fatah issued a communiqué taking responsibility but the assessment in the IDF was that the terrorists were Palestinians who were trained and directed by Hizballah and infiltrated from Lebanon. Hizballah pointedly refused to “confirm or deny” its involvement in the attack but is “proud” of its support of the Palestinians.
2. On August 2, 2003 a senior Hizballah activist, ‘Ali Hussein Saleh was killed by a car bomb. Hizballah accused Israel and the next day fired three rounds of anti-aircraft shells in the air over Israeli towns along the border. Hizballah claimed that the rounds had been fired against Israeli planes, which had crossed the border. This was the beginning of an escalation, which resulted in Hizballah rocket fire into the Golan and the death of an Israeli by the anti-aircraft fire (10 August).

⁶⁴ *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, February 18, 2001, *al-‘Ahd* (Lebanon), February 23, 2001.

– by dint of its military superiority – was effectively constrained by Hizballah’s “low-intensity deterrence”. This conclusion by Nasrallah did not negate the Israeli deterrence all together. It was clear to Hizballah that the domestic and international pressures would effectively restrain Israel’s use of that power as long as Hizballah did not cross a specific red line. The Hizballah understanding of this “red line” was in terms of territory and weaponry and types of attack:

1. **In terms of territory** – Hizballah believed that attacks that would take place in the disputed area – first in South Lebanon and after the Israeli withdrawal in the region of the Shab’a Farms and the Ghajar village – would be tolerated by Israel as compatible with the rules of the game that had been set immediately after the Israeli withdrawal.
2. **In respect to the types of weaponry** employed – Hizballah refrained from using its “strategic weapons” (medium and long range rockets) or even from launching short-range rockets (“Katyushas”) across the border. The leaders of Hizballah and Iran assessed that use of rockets would serve as a *casus belli* for Israel. The option of massive rocket fire on Israel’s population centers was reserved as a deterrent to prevent Israel from attacking Hizballah headquarters or strategic targets of the organization deep in Lebanon. To use that weapon on a sporadic basis would impinge on the organization’s deterrence for a time it would be needed.
3. **In terms of types of attack** – it was believed that Israel would tolerate small arms and light artillery fire across the border, local incursions and even attempts to kidnap Israeli soldiers.

The July 12 attack that sparked the second Lebanon war between Israel and Hizballah came after four or five previous attempts by Hizballah to abduct Israeli soldiers on the border, since the abduction and killing of three soldiers in October 2000.⁶⁵ Hizballah, it seems, did not accord much credence to Israeli messages, that any such attempt would elicit a large-scale Israeli military operation.⁶⁶

The linkage between Israeli politics and Hizballah tests of Israel’s deterrence and attempts to draw new lines and rules is also noteworthy. Hizballah took advantage of Israeli political circumstances to create precedents of provocations without Israel retaliating with force. Hizballah’s assessment of Israel in the summer of 2006 was based on experience with the previous Barak and Sharon governments. The Olmert government was perceived as averse to military conflict. Therefore, in the absence of any clear signal from Israel, Hizballah had no reason to assume that the Olmert-Peretz team would react differently than their predecessors to such an attack. Ostensibly, the fact that the new Israeli government retaliated with force in Gaza to the abduction of an Israeli soldier should have alerted Hizballah to such a contingency. However, by

⁶⁵ During 2005 and 2006 there were a number of attempts by Hizballah to abduct Israeli soldiers on the border. These were disrupted until the successful attack in July 2006. Israeli Military Intelligence indicated in its annual assessment that Hizballah was not deterred from these attempts by the fear of Israeli retaliation and that one of the likely scenarios for escalation was success of such an attempt. Lecture by Brig. Gen (ret.) Yossef Kuperwasser at the ICT, September 10, 2006.

⁶⁶ Some time after the first kidnapping, Nasrallah said that he had known that Israel would not attack Lebanon in the aftermath of the kidnapping of the three soldiers (October 2000). He assessed that Israel would react with a usual menu of artillery fire and air attacks on Hizballah bases near the border.

the same token, Hizballah may have taken into account that the Israeli reaction in Gaza derived from the government's need to justify the further unilateral disengagement in the West Bank and that, in any case, the Palestinians lacked the deterrent weapons that Hizballah threatened to use. Israel had not used the Gaza precedent to warn any other enemies and therefore, rightly, Hizballah did not see it as a possible consideration to refrain from action.

The Palestinian Theatre

The Hizballah threat **inside Israel** is primarily in the field of intelligence gathering and recruitment of Israelis from minority communities (Arabs and Druze) for intelligence and smuggling of arms.⁶⁷ Another area in which Hizballah poses a threat within the borders of Israel is through infiltration of terrorists recruited abroad for attacks inside Israel (see above). In the **Palestinian theatre**, the Hizballah involvement takes a number of shapes:

1. Direct relations with the leaderships of those organizations outside of the West Bank and Gaza (WBG).
2. Facilitating the transfer of sophisticated arms by Iran to Fatah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and Hamas.
3. Direct recruitment and operation of Palestinians for terrorist missions for Hizballah.

Hizballah involvement in the Palestinian theatre has grown constantly since the outbreak of the second Intifada in October 2000. Hizballah has been the go-between Iran and the Palestinian organizations, via their headquarters in Damascus, which transfer large sums of Iranian money, weapons and ammunition, in addition to ideological instruction of Palestinian terrorists to the West Bank and Gaza. Hizballah has developed an elaborate relationship with almost all the Palestinian organizations operating in the West Bank and Gaza. The main groups with which Hizballah has intimate operational links are the PIJ and Hamas. Along with its institutionalized links with those organizations, Hizballah has actively recruited Palestinians for terrorist attacks which were directly financed and organized by itself. Some of these Palestinians were recruited when visiting Iran in the framework of Iran's offer to wounded Palestinians to recuperate in Iranian hospitals. It is estimated that approximately 75 percent of the terrorist attacks carried out in the Palestinian

⁶⁷ A number of cases were uncovered, the most important ones being: In July 2002, a group of Israeli Arab drug dealers from Nazareth and Ghajar were suspected of transferring to hostile elements in Lebanon computer programs, maps, other objects, and classified intelligence documents in exchange for drugs and weapons; In September 2002, ten Israeli citizens, residents of the Galilee, were arrested on suspicion of intelligence to Hizballah in exchange for drugs and money. The principal detainee was IDF Lt.-Col. 'Umar al-Hayb from Beit Zarzir who provided Hizballah with information on the deployment of IDF units in the area around the Shab'a Farms, maps of the North, information on Israeli military officers and Israeli military planning. Other cases included the arrest of (January 24, 2003) of a network of Hizballah agents which included Israeli drug dealers and Israeli Arabs and the arrest of Nissim Nasser – an Israeli of Lebanese origin who procured intelligence material (maps, etc.) for Hizballah. Details from the Information Center for Intelligence and Terror in Gelilot.

territories and Israel in the last two years have been instigated and funded by Hizballah.⁶⁸

Hizballah's involvement in smuggling arms for Iran to the various Palestinian groups includes organizing smuggling via the sea (the Santorini – May 2001⁶⁹ – and the Karin A – January 2002⁷⁰). The Karin A shipment was facilitated by 'Imad Moghniyya. Hizballah was also instrumental in organizing smuggling of rockets to Hamas and PIJ via Jordan in June 2001.

Hizballah saw involvement in the Palestinian theatre and operations inside Israel launched from Europe as legitimate acts, which would not provoke an Israeli response. This assumption was not based on Israel's prior behavior vis-à-vis the Palestinians; the "Peace of Galilee" operation in June 1982 was launched in response to an attack by Abu Nidal (not even Fatah) in London, and Israel bombed PLO headquarters in Tunis (October 1, 1985) in retaliation for the murder of Israeli citizens in Larnaca, Cyprus and in Barcelona, Spain the week before. Hizballah's reasoning therefore was based on its perception that Israel would be deterred from implementing the same paradigm by Hizballah's threat to Northern Israel.

The Global Terrorist Stage

The threat of Hizballah terrorism against Israeli and Jewish targets abroad was demonstrated in four separate incidents: the bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires (1992), the bombing two years later of the Jewish Community Centre (AMIA) in Buenos Aires AMIA (1994), the botched attempt to bomb the Israeli Embassy in Bangkok (1994) and the kidnapping of an Israeli, Elhanan Tennenbaum from Europe in 2001. In addition Hizballah exploited its foreign infrastructure a number of times to infiltrate terrorists into Israel with foreign passports. The most prominent of these cases were those of the British citizen, Hussein Maqdad (1996)⁷¹, the German Steven Smirk (1997)⁷², the British citizen, Jihad Shuman (2001)⁷³ and the

⁶⁸ According to Israeli security sources. A salient case is the attack on the Park Hotel in Netanya (March 2002) in which Hizballah experts prepared the special explosives to maximize the lethal effects.

⁶⁹ The Santorini was captured on May 6, 2001 after having been involved in three previous smuggling attempts by the PFLP-GC from Tripoli (November 2000), by Hizballah from Jiyah beach south of Beirut (April 2001), and by the PFLP-GC from Tripoli (May 2001). Various quality weapons were found aboard the boat, including dozens of barrels filled with Katyusha rockets, antiaircraft (Strela) and antitank missiles, mortars, small arms and ammunition.

⁷⁰ On the early morning of January 3, 2002 the Israel Defense Forces seized a ship called Karin A, carrying 50 ton of weapons and ammunition for the Palestinian Authority. A naval Commando force seized the ship's crew, some 500 km off the Israeli coast. The ship was carrying a variety of weaponry, among them: short and long range Katyusha rockets, anti tank missiles (Low and Sagger), mortars, mines, explosives, sniper rifles, shotguns and more.

⁷¹ Hussein Maqdad was a Hizballah operative who entered Israel with a foreign passport and exploded in his hotel room in East Jerusalem while preparing a bomb in 1996.

⁷² Steven Smirk was a German citizen who converted to Islam and was recruited by Hizballah while in Lebanon. He was sent to Israel to perpetrate a suicide attack and was arrested in November 1997.

⁷³ On January 5, 2001 a British-Lebanese citizen named Jihad Shuman was arrested on suspicion that he was sent to Israel to perpetrate a terrorist attack on behalf of Hizballah. In his hotel room a large sum of money was found, along with a skull cap of a religious Jew, a timer, and three cellular phones. Shuman was born in Sierra Leone of Lebanese parents but inherited British citizenship from his father. He was recruited to Hizballah during a visit to Lebanon. His recruitment and training were completed

Lebanese Fawzi Ayyub⁷⁴. The Hizballah involvement in the preparation and dispatch of the arms boat Karin A to the Palestinian Authority (January 2002) also relied on an extra-Lebanese infrastructure of the organization. Another important area of Hizballah activities outside of Lebanon is fundraising and procurement.

There is no doubt regarding the responsibility of Hizballah and Iran for the two Buenos Aires attacks.⁷⁵ According to the information that has accumulated since then, the planning of both attacks in Buenos Aires was assigned to the “External Security” apparatus of ‘Imad Moghniyya. On the eve of the attack there was a steep increase in communication between the Iranian Embassy in Buenos Aires and Tehran. The involvement of Hizballah in the attack on the US military base in Khobar (Saudi Arabia) reflected the same trend.

In addition to the actual attacks listed above, Hizballah operatives have also been involved in numerous cases of recruitment of agents for Iranian intelligence, casing of Israeli and Jewish targets. Hizballah infrastructure is particularly strong in South America (Brazil, Peru, Argentina), in South East Asia (Malaysia, Indonesia) in West Africa (Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone) and in Europe (UK, France, Belgium, Netherlands).

The accepted view in Israel has been that almost all Hizballah’s operations abroad (with the possible exception of the abduction of Elhanan Tennenbaum) were in the context of retaliation for out of the ordinary actions by Israel. The first attack on an Israeli target in Buenos Aires (the Israeli Embassy, March 17, 1992) can be viewed as retaliation for the killing of the previous Secretary General of Hizballah, ‘Abbas al-Musawi by Israel (it took place on the 30 day anniversary of his death). The second attack (the Jewish community center – “Asociacion Mutual Israelita Argentina - AMIA”, July 18, 1994) took place after Israel bombed a Hizballah training center in the Beqaa in Lebanon and killed twenty-six Hizballah activists and after Israel abducted Sheikh Mustafa Dirani, who had held the Israeli aviator Ron Arad and handed him over to the Iranians. In Israel there were those who believed that Hizballah perpetrated the two attacks to prove that it had a “long arm” and that there were numerous Israeli “soft targets” abroad that could be hit, if Israel were to use its own “long arm” against Hizballah or Iran. From that point of view, the two attacks had created a real deterrence by Hizballah; Israel was effectively deterred from

during visits to his handlers in Malaysia and finally he was sent to London to prepare for his visit to Israel. He was supposed to have dug up explosives, which were cached near Mt. Scopus in Jerusalem, was arrested while attempting to find the cache, tried, sentenced and jailed.

⁷⁴ Fawzi Ayyub was arrested in Israel in June 2002. He entered Israel from a European country carrying a false American passport, and checked into a hotel in downtown Jerusalem. A number of days after arriving he traveled to Hebron, where the Palestinians arrested him. During his stay in Israel, he met with another activist who accompanied him and assisted him on his mission. The two were instructed by their operators abroad to retrieve weapons from a hiding place and use them to perpetrate an attack. Ayyub had been a member of the External Security apparatus of ‘Imad Mughniyya, Hassan Nasrallah’s deputy for military affairs.

⁷⁵ Yusuf al-Juni and Abu al-Ful, two of the Hizballah operatives who were involved in this attack were arrested later in Jordan for smuggling weapons to Palestinian terrorists in 2001. The suicide bomber in the AMIA attack was a member of Hizballah, Ibrahim Hussein Berri, who came to Argentina a few days before the attack and made farewell calls to his family in Lebanon before the attack. Ten days before the attack on the Israeli Embassy in 1992, the Iranian ambassadors in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay were called home, apparently so they would not be in their embassies at the time of the attack.

targeting top-level Hizballah leaders or acting against Hizballah abroad by the possibility of such attacks in retaliation.

Though Hizballah has refrained from terrorist attacks abroad since the mid 1990s, there are copious signs to the effect that the organization has continued to maintain an operational capability for such attacks, if and when the necessity arises. This operational capability is not contingent on the existence of Hizballah cells and infrastructure in the vicinity of the target, since Hizballah can rely on Iranian assets abroad – diplomatic presence, IRGC/MOIS assets and even Iranian civilian commercial presence of companies affiliated with the regime (Iran Air, IRNA, Bonyad companies, etc.). The main areas in which Hizballah maintains such a capability are:

1. South America – Hizballah maintains an extensive infrastructure in the “triangle” of the borders Argentina-Chile-Uruguay, based on networks of Lebanese Shiites, involved in drug and arms smuggling.
2. South East Asia – The failed attempt to explode a truck bomb in the Israeli Embassy in Bangkok (1993) exposed an extensive infrastructure of Hizballah in Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. This network includes both Lebanese Shiites and local Sunni Muslims who were recruited by Iran through the Office of Islamic Propagation, Ahl al-Bayt and other proselytizing organizations belonging to the Iranian state.⁷⁶
3. Australia – The Hizballah infrastructure in Australia is based mainly on Lebanese Shiites.
4. West Africa – Hizballah’s infrastructure in this region, like that of South America, is based on Lebanese Shiite émigrés.
5. Iraq is a new theatre of operations for Hizballah that has emerged since the US occupation of that country. In this case, Hizballah acts as a pure Iranian proxy by providing training and operational support to Muqtada al-Sadr’s *Jaysh al-Mahdi* and to “*’Usbat al-Ansar*”. According to various reports, Hizballah experts have been training pro-Iranian groups in Iraq under the tutelage of the “al-Qods Force” of the IRGC.

An important but unresolved question is the links between Hizballah (and Iran) with al-Qa’ida. Both Iran and Hizballah vehemently deny any links to al-Qa’ida.⁷⁷ Indeed, ostensibly the two groups are diametrically opposed; al-Qa’ida – particularly the branch in Iraq – is characterized by a rabid anti-Shiism and is actively involved in fighting with Hizballah’s own allies in Iraq. The information at hand does not permit a conclusion on this issue.

⁷⁶ The botched attack on the Israeli Embassy in Bangkok was facilitated by a Malay Sunni, Pandu Yudhawitna who led a network of local Muslims and was recruited by MOIS officers stationed in Malaysia in the early 1980s.

⁷⁷ Sheikh Muhammad Qortaji to *St. Petersburg Times*, May 15, 2005: “We are against al-Qa’ida. We are not in agreement with the ideals and the vision of al-Qa’ida. (They) see us as enemies, and as non-Muslims.”

Israel's Strategy towards Hizballah

The Israeli goal in deterring Hizballah in Lebanon evolved with the parameters of confrontation, according to two periods: the period of the "Security Zone" until May 2000, and the period since the May 2000 withdrawal. Between the first Israeli withdrawal to the Security Zone in 1986 and the second and final withdrawal in May 2000, driving principles of the Israeli military strategy in the Security Zone were:

1. Reliance on the South Lebanese Army (SLA) for day-to-day security.
2. Israeli positions in secured outposts outside of settled areas.⁷⁸
3. Readiness to respond in real time to Hizballah actions within South Lebanon with artillery stationed inside the Israeli border and air power.
4. Occasional special operations against specific Hizballah targets (such as the abduction of Sheikh 'Ubeid and Sheikh Dirani) with the object of gaining intelligence and a bargaining card for the MIA Israeli aviator, Ron Arad.

Israel's efforts to deter Hizballah were based on threats of high intensity attacks in retaliation for Hizballah's low-intensity warfare against Israel. The goal of these threats was to deter Hizballah from rocket attacks on Israeli population centers in the North, from shooting across the internationally recognized border and from attacks on Israeli positions. Israel did not link the Lebanese theatre with Hizballah terrorism inside Israel or WBG or abroad. In fact, Israel did not present any form of deterrence vis-à-vis Hizballah involvement in terrorism within the Palestinian territories and Israel.

The important weapon of targeted killing of leaders that Israel has used with great effectiveness against Palestinian organizations has not played a role in Israel's struggle against Hizballah. A seminal event in this context was the killing of its Secretary General, 'Abbas al-Musawi, in February 1992. The conventional wisdom in the Israeli intelligence and security community is that the terrorist attacks on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires and the Jewish Community Center in that city were Hizballah/Iranian retaliations for the killing of Musawi and the abduction of Dirani (or the bombing of a training center in the Beqaa Valley in which a large number of activists were killed). Whether or not this is true, the resultant balance of deterrence became a permanent element in Israeli strategy towards Hizballah.

On the other hand, Israel focused its efforts to deter Hizballah on indirect deterrence through the Lebanese regime. Two major operations formed the balance of deterrence between Israel and Hizballah during the 1990s: Operation "Judgment and Accounting" (July 1993)⁷⁹ and Operation "Grapes of Wrath" (April 1996).⁸⁰ In both

⁷⁸ A tactic that was referred to derisively by Nasrallah as the Israelis in their "cages".

⁷⁹ Operation "Judgment and Accounting" (*Din ve-Heshbon*) took place on July 25–31, 1993 in response to provocations by Hizballah that were meant, essentially, to test Israel's deterrence. The Israeli response set the stage for future cases; massive artillery, air and naval fire around Lebanese civilian targets in order to cause massive flight of Lebanese refugees to the North, who, it was hoped, would pressure the Lebanese government to restrain Hizballah. This hope was in vain. The "public opinion" of the refugees had little impact on the Lebanese government and the latter had no real leverage over Hizballah. The operation ended with a set of "understandings" brokered by the US. These stipulated that both sides would refrain from attacking civilians.

these operations, Israel took the initiative in order to deter Hizballah from attacks on Israeli civilian targets. Both of them focused on indirect deterrence, which was aimed at Lebanon and the Shiite population of the South.

Even after these two operations, Israel made some rather half-hearted attempts to impose responsibility for Hizballah's actions on the government of Lebanon but did not make full use of this leverage.⁸¹ The constraint for Israel to pressure Hizballah through the government in Beirut grew after the Syrian withdrawal. Since then, Israel was constrained by the international community (particularly the US and France) not to pressure the new anti-Syrian government. This was evident during the 2006 war, during which Lebanese government targets were not attacked. The fact that the new Lebanese government (in contrast to the pro-Syrian President, Emile Lahoud) did not support Hizballah, was involved in a dialogue with it to bring about its disarmament and was supported by the West made it difficult for Israel to use leverage over it as a "host state" against Hizballah. Officially, during the last war, Israel stated that "the Lebanese government is fully responsible for attacks that come from their sovereign territory and must take immediate action to peacefully return the two abducted soldiers. If not, the government will face the consequences of its decisions."⁸² In fact, Israel refrained from taking action against Lebanese government targets.

In light of the ineffectiveness of indirect deterrence of Hizballah via the Lebanese government, Israel attempted to employ leverage over Hizballah's patrons. However, Israel has no direct line of engagement and no leverage to pressure Iran without escalating into a total confrontation, including endangering Jewish and Israeli targets abroad. Furthermore, Israeli Iranian agenda focused primarily on Iran's own missile capabilities and nascent nuclear program. Syria, on the other hand has been perceived as the "weak link" and susceptible to pressure as a lever to deter Hizballah – at least

⁸⁰ Operation "Grapes of Wrath" (Invei Za'am) took place in April 1996. Hizballah responded to Israeli attacks on its bases, in which it claimed that civilians were harmed, with sporadic rocket attacks against Israeli civilian towns in North Israel. These attacks took place during a period of escalation in the Palestinian terrorism against Israel (a spate of bus bombings and Israel's targeted killing of the "engineer" of Hamas, Yahya 'Ayash), under the "lame duck" premiership (elections were slated for May) of Shimon Peres after the assassination of Yitshak Rabin. Hizballah saw the period leading up to the Israeli elections as a window of opportunity to set a new set of rules which would overturn the understanding of "Judgment and Accounting". The operation ended abruptly after a stray Israeli shell exploded in a UN post in Kafar Qana, killing a large number of Lebanese who had taken refuge there.

⁸¹ The first case was on June 24-25, 1999, when Ehud Barak had already been elected Prime Minister (May 17) but had not yet assumed office. The caretaker government of Benjamin Netanyahu authorized a wide-scale strike on Lebanese infrastructure in Beirut and north of the Litani River. Two main power plants in Jamhour were hit, blacking out most of Beirut. Israel warned that this is "a taste" of what Lebanon would feel if it continues to allow Hizballah to operate against Israeli targets in contradiction to the understandings. Hizballah retaliated with five barrages of rockets. The round ended after US intervention with Syria and a stern Israeli warning to Damascus. The second case was on February 7-8, 2000. After a series of attacks on Israeli forces in South Lebanon, during which Israel had restrained its response in order not to disrupt the peace talks with Syria, Israel warned Syria and Lebanon that future attacks would draw Israeli retaliation against Lebanese infrastructure. The warning was carried out during the night with air strikes against Lebanese targets (Operation "Steady Torch" – "Lapid Eitan") in which the IAF attacked three electricity transformation stations as well as a Hizballah headquarters in Baalbek. In this case, it was clear to both sides that Israel was "pulling its punches" as even the targets that were chosen were hit in a manner that did not incur great damage.

⁸² IDF spokesman. <http://www1.idf.il/DOVER/site/mainpage.asp?sl=EN&id=7&docid=54350&Pos=1&last=0&bScope=False>.

as long as Syria was physically occupying Lebanon. As long as Syria was in military control of Lebanon, Israel had the ability to attack Syrian targets in Lebanon, without risking escalation into a total war with Damascus. Since the Syrian withdrawal, this option does not exist.⁸³

⁸³ Israeli deterrence towards Syria as a lever towards Hizballah was employed on various occasions and in various ways:

1. Passing of warnings from Israel to Syria via foreign (European and Arab) diplomats and leaders, that Israel holds it responsible for Hizballah's actions. It is not clear how many – if any – of these messages reached Damascus, and in any case, Israel never received a response.
2. Military retaliation against Syrian targets in Lebanon in retaliation for Hizballah attacks
3. Low flying warning flights of Israeli fighter jets (including sonic booms) over the Assad home in al-Ladhaqiyya.

Conclusions

The conventional terminology that describes relationships between states and organizations would define Hizballah as a “proxy organization” – first and foremost of Iran, and secondly of Syria. This definition however must be finessed in order for it to fit the unique case of Hizballah. Hizballah is indeed a proxy organization of Iran; it receives its funding, arms and orders from Tehran. However, it is the paramount proxy and has achieved a status of almost a strategic ally of the regime in Tehran. Whereas the relationships of many proxy organizations with their patron states are more of a *mariage de convenance*, Hizballah sees itself intrinsically, as part of the Iranian Revolution; like any body in Iran, it owes full allegiance to the Supreme Leader and accepts the basic tenets of the Revolution.

This core identification of Hizballah with Iran is significant for any discussion of wielding leverage over the organization through its local Lebanese interests. Hizballah’s “proxy-patron” relationship with Syria is even more questionable. Since the rise to power of Bashar al-Asad and particularly since the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, this relationship has changed and today, Hizballah plays the role of Syria’s prime ally in Lebanon. Syria supports Hizballah with arms and freedom of movement through Damascus, but its real leverage over the organization has declined.

The conventional wisdom in the Arab world is that Hizballah has achieved a victory just by the survival of its leadership (particularly Nasrallah) and by not being forced to be demilitarized. The balance of the summer of 2006 however is not as positive for Hizballah as the movement’s leaders and Iran would like to portray it. Hizballah’s gains are mainly intangible: a popular sense of Hizballah victory, an image of Nasrallah as victorious, enhanced links with Syria, enhanced status with Iran, Israeli political and military crisis.

Curiously, it is in Lebanon that this image of a psychological victory is being challenged. Lebanese sources⁸⁴ point out that:

1. The destruction of its strategic infrastructure, built up over six years was counter-productive to Hizballah’s strategic aims of maintaining its military presence as close as possible to Israel’s border..
2. Creating a crisis at the time that the West is engaged in both a war on terrorism and an attempt to curb Iran’s (Hizballah’s patron) nuclear ambitions, placed Hizballah in the wider context of Western policy towards these two issues.
3. Israel’s position that the attack and abduction of the soldiers was the responsibility of Lebanon, and its targeting of Lebanese government targets which supported Hizballah undermined Hizballah’s claim to no accountability and provided the Lebanese government with the pretext to impose – even partially – its authority.
4. The willingness – albeit limited – of the international community to re-engage in the Lebanese theatre, including through international forces with a stronger

⁸⁴ See *al-Nahar*, *al-Hayat*; Interview with Sheikh Muhammad al-Amin (Lebanese Shiite *marja'*), *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, September 16, 2006.

mandate than that of UNIFIL, created a new situation that Hizballah had no interest in.

5. Premature use of its own (and Iran's) main weapons of strategic deterrence against Israel. Once Hizballah "wasted" the missile deterrence, it has ceased to be an unknown factor that can deter Israel in the future. Israel's perception of the threat that preceded the war has been proven over-rated while it had underestimated the resilience of its own citizens.
6. The perception of Israel's willingness to continue to act with force will make it difficult for Nasrallah to move and operate in public as before.
7. A large segment of Hizballah's social system has been destroyed, after most of the economic infrastructure, schools, hospitals and preaching institutions had been destroyed by the IDF. This presents an opportunity to transfer a comprehensive economic aid to Southern Lebanon, under the sole responsibility of the Lebanese government. The "Cedar Revolution" coalition would very much like to seize the opportunity to rebuild Lebanon after the termination of hostilities. However, Iran has already started transferring funds to Hizballah for the sake of reconstructing the South while other forces (the West and Saudi Arabia) have been trailing behind..
8. Hizballah did not get support from the Arab and Muslim world. The popularity of Hizballah among Lebanese Shiites and non-Shiites is also counter-balanced by a deepening of the Sunni-Shiite rift both in Lebanon and in the Arab world in general, a renewed call for disarming Hizballah, and some criticism among traditional Shiite clerics in Lebanon of the Nasrallah personality cult.

The crisis, which Hizballah created in Lebanon after the fighting of summer 2006, may be the beginning of a fundamental change in the political alignment in that country. Until 2006 Hizballah and Iran were confident that the balance of power in Lebanon would preclude any real attempt to disarm the organization. The Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon and the assessment of the anti-Syrian forces in the country that Hizballah had endangered the good of Lebanon for Iranian interests has brought the situation to an impasse. At this point, Hizballah may have reached a strategic decision that it can no longer rely on its ability to maneuver between the different political forces in Lebanon and must seize formal constitutional power.

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Mr. Menashe Amir – Director of Voice of Israel in Farsi and expert on Iran.

Prof. Uzi Arad – former Director of Intelligence in Israeli Secret Intelligence Service (Mossad) and former Political Advisor to PM Benjamin Netanyahu.

Gen. (rtd.) Yaacov Amidror – former Deputy Head of Military Intelligence (AMAN) and former head of the College for National Security.

Prof. Moshe Arens – Former Minister of Defense, Israel (1983–1984, 1990–1992, 1999)

Col. Avriël Bar-Yosef – Secretary of Knesset Defense and Foreign Relations Committee.

Adv. Haim Ben Ami – former Director of Interrogation in Israel Security Agency (Shin-Bet).

Brig. Gen. (r32td.) Amos Gilboa – former Deputy Head of MI.

Mr. Ephraim Halevy – Former Head of Israeli Secret Intelligence Service (Mossad).

Brig. Gen. (rtd.) Yossef Kuperwasser – former Deputy Head of Military Intelligence for Analysis.

Dr. Meir Litvak – University of Tel Aviv. Expert on Hizballah.

Adv. Dan Meridor – former Minister in charge of Intelligence in the Office of the Prime Minister and Chair of the Committee for Formulating Israel's Defense Doctrine.

Mr. Yossi Sarid – former MK, former Minister, former member of Knesset Defense and Foreign Relations Committee.

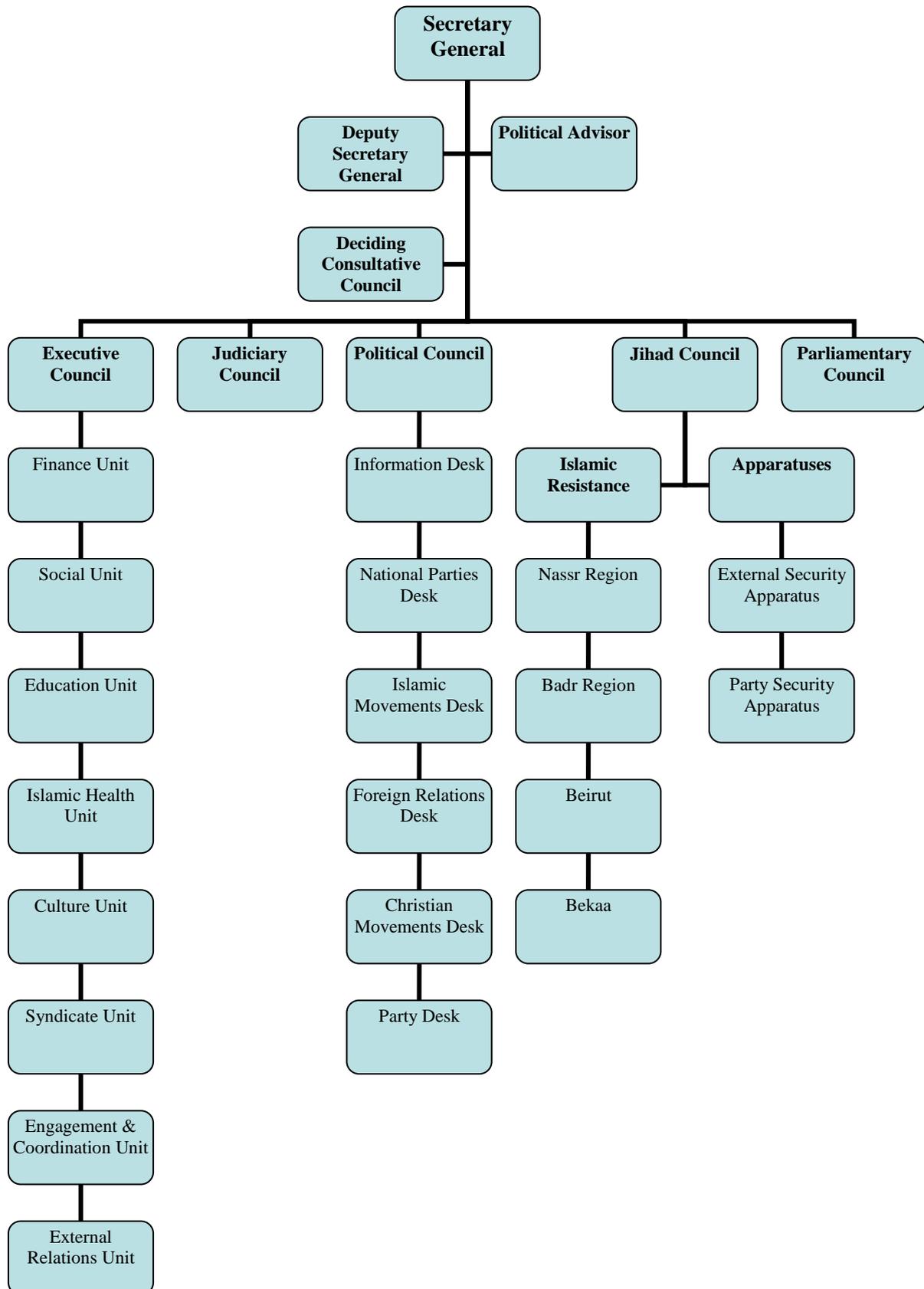
Mr. Shabtai Shavit – former Head of ISIS (Mossad).

MK Dr. Yuval Steinitz – former Chairman of Knesset Defense and Foreign Relations Committee.

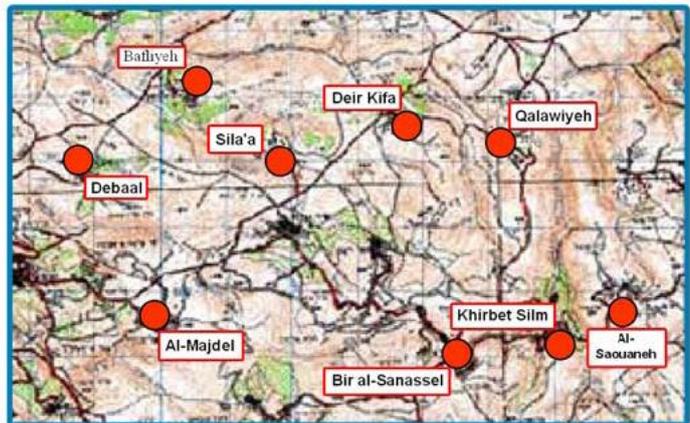
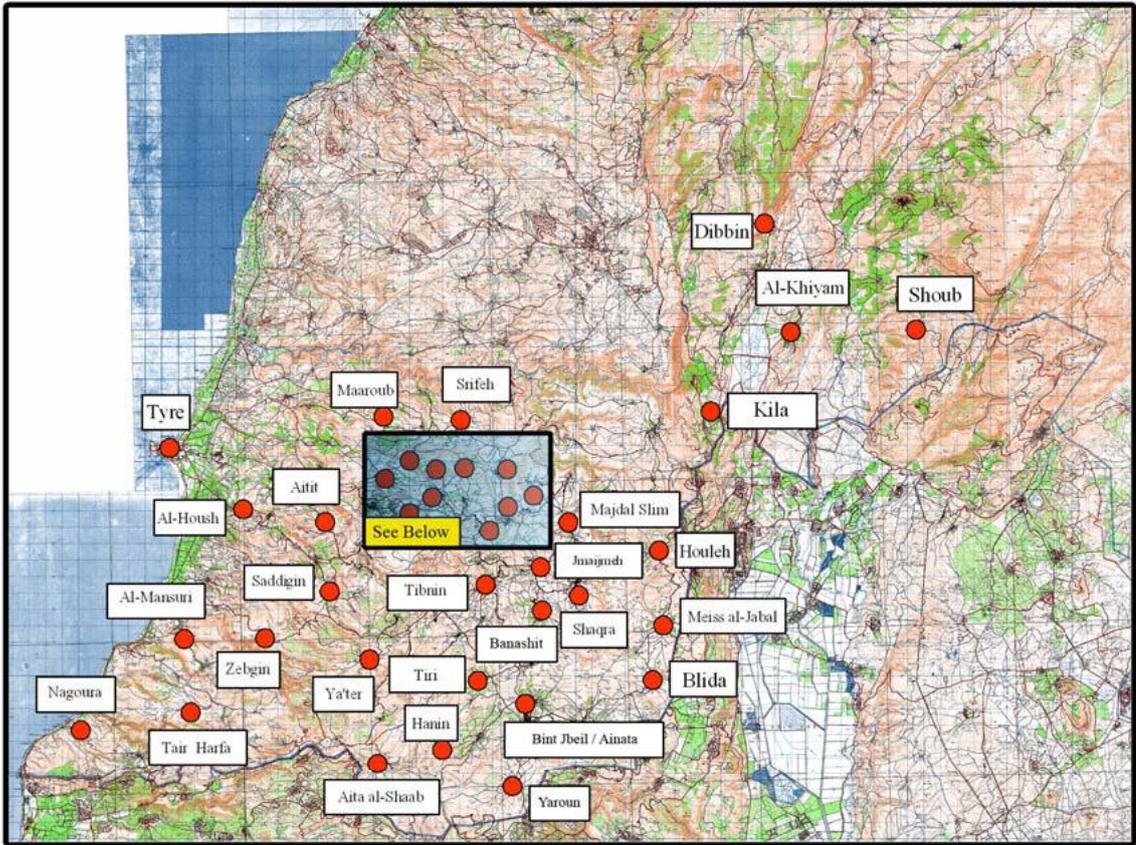
MK Maj. Gen (rtd.) Danny Yatom – former Head of ISIS (Mossad), former Military Aide to PM Rabin.

Prof. Eyal Zisser – Former senior intelligence officer and expert on Syria.

Appendix A: Organizational Chart of Hizballah



Appendix B: Hizballah Infrastructure in South Lebanon⁸⁵



⁸⁵ IDF map provided for project of CSS on Hizballah's use of human shields.