

Hezbollah:

The Sustainability of Asymmetrical Warfare

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Abstract:

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) are generally regarded internationally as a premier fighting organization and have decisively beaten virtually all its Arab adversaries on the battlefield, often simultaneously. In a conventional military capacity the IDF is exemplary, but throughout the Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanon from 1982 through 2000 as well as during the latest round of Arab-Israeli warfare that took place in the summer of 2006; Israel was unable to gain a decisive victory against one key regional player: The Party of God (*Hezbollah*). In fact, it seems Hezbollah's defiance of Israel and their ability to survive the two wars has earned them immeasurable credibility on the Arab street as the only Arab organization to hold their own against the IDF on the battlefield.

The central thesis of this research paper is that Hezbollah is a sophisticated threat because not only operates with full population support, is well armed and externally supplied, and is more like an internal nation than a mere insurgent group; Hezbollah is the future of non-state conflict in that it can successfully hold off the armed forces of a great power and force the international community to pay attention to a third world crisis while providing for the population that shields it.

Hezbollah will not be easily defeated by the IDF and may export its modal to other regional conflicts.

PART 1:

The Theory of Asymmetrical Warfare

There are two theoretical frameworks we have to understand when we examine the Hezbollah organization and its military arm Islamic Resistance. The first is a look at a piece by Ivan Arreuin-Toft attempting to understand how the weak sometimes (and increasingly) win in guerrilla confrontations. The second is Michael Walzers's conception of the relations between a guerrilla force and the civilian population. With their frameworks in mind we arrive at a more realistic perspective on how the Hezbollah organization has withstood two wars with the Israeli state and why its phenomenon as an organization differentiates it from virtually all other jihadist movements

On Asymmetrical Warfare

In analyzing the outcome of a military confrontation between disproportionately matched forces the following observation is made by Ivan Arreuin-Toft: in regards to strategic interaction weaker powers can win conflicts when they employ tactics that minimize direct confrontation with the enemy, cultivate and maintain civilian support, and prolong the duration of the conflict. The key factor according to Toft goes beyond the will and interests of the two parties. It relies on applying the proper response to the enemy's tactics that favor the conditions suitable to resistance by the weak; that is to say a favorable to irregular warfare and a guerrilla campaign.

The Toft analysis is seen in light of Andrew Mack's ideas of interest asymmetry. This understanding of asymmetrical warfare has three key elements: 1. "Relative power explains relative interest", 2. "Relative interests explain relative political vulnerability"

and 3. Relative vulnerability is why strong actors lose". Summed up, Mack is saying that weak powers have a high interest because it is the survival of their people that is at stake and their political freedom where as strong power's are viewing the conflict through a prism of expansion, a theory of political dominos, or an issue of credibility. This makes them more politically vulnerable because the rational for waging a long war has to be justified on the home front to an increasingly adversarial population. The stronger power will often, according to Mack, abandon the war because of unrest at home on behalf of population or local elites. Toft introduces the idea that while interest is a factor it is not the sole factor. The decisive element to the equation is known as **strategic interaction**.

In a conflict there is always a grand strategy (the totality of an actors resources devoted to the military, political, and economic objectives of the engagement) and the tactics (the art of fighting battles and specific instruments of war employed). According to Toft the objective of war is to compel the other actor to do its will. To understand this combination of grand strategy implemented through the tactics employed Toft identifies four specific types of engagement: two offensive, two defensive¹. Direct Attack is the use of force to capture an opponent's values (cities, strategic assets, economic centers) and eliminate the opponent's armed forces' ability to resist. Barbarism is a systematic violation of the laws of war (War Convention) directing violence at non-combatants via rape, torture, and genocide to achieve the military or political goals of the campaign. Direct Defense is the use of armed forces to thwart an adversary's capture or destruction of values. The goal is to cripple the advancing force. Guerrilla Warfare is the organization of a portion of the society to engage in irregular warfare while avoiding direct confrontation with the enemy. Since every strategy is presumed to have an ideal

¹ Noted in **How the Weak Win: A Theory of Asymmetrical Conflict**, Ivan Arreguin-Toft, pp.99-107.

counterstrategy Toft argues that these four strategic interactions in varying combinations are at the heart of explaining asymmetrical warfare scenarios where the weak win.

In a situation of Direct Attack v. Direct Defense nothing mediates the imbalance of one side's armed forces. The defending, weaker power as a result most is almost certain to lose the interaction. In the situation of Direct Attack v. Indirect Defense ie; guerrilla warfare; the forces of the attacker tend to kill large numbers of non-combatants in their attempt to uproot an irregular force. This stimulates weak-actor resistance. The defender has sacrificed values for the ability to engage the attacker when he is least prepared to resist. Values are sacrificed for time. In this scenario the weaker actor can win. With Indirect Attack v. Direct Defense attacks on civilian population centers generally harden the resolve of the defender and general acts of barbarism stiffen resistance to the enemy. In the case of Indirect Attack v. Indirect Defense where barbarism is used to repress an irregular campaign cases prove that the stronger power when willing to use barbarism on an occupied population soon make the costs of the guerrilla campaign too high to sustain. These are Toft's strategic interaction outcomes.

In general Toft's thesis supports the idea that each side is always better off using a mixed strategy; that is to say by using the opposite approach of the one being offered in resistance or attack. Anything that allows civilian participation in resistance, prolongs the conflict, and avoids direct engagements deflects a stronger conventional force. Whenever a stronger force can directly meet a weaker enemy or resorts to barbarism in the face of irregular warfare the weaker party is likely to lose. Toft therefore believes it is interaction not interest that explains the phenomenon of why the weak sometimes win.

On the Use of Guerilla Warfare

Surprise is the essential feature of Guerrilla Warfare. In a circumstance where one cannot beat ones enemy in a direct confrontation the best approach is to draw out the conflict, attack when unexpected, and rely on civilian support. Passing off one's forces as civilians but functioning as combatants; Walzer suggests that this challenges the War Convention (on acceptable conduct under arms) by blurring the definition of combatant/non-combatant. If surrender is an explicit agreement and exchange: an actor stops fighting for benevolent quarantine. Than in guerrilla war the actor allows occupation (surrender) but carries on all the activities of a war. Guerillas don't subvert the war convention by attacking civilians (as terrorists do): they invite the enemy to do that by hiding in their midst.

Walzer states that resistance is legitimate and the punishment of resistance is therefore also legitimate. There is a twofold justification for guerrilla action which serves as a framework for those that fight it. First, the people are no longer being defended by an army; the only army in the field is the army of the oppressors; the people are defending themselves. Second, if you want to fight them you are going to have to fight civilians and you won't be war with an army you'll be at war with a people and a nation. In this kind of war the lines are blurred.

To be eligible for war rights guerrilla fighters must wear a fixed distinctive sign visible at a distance and carry arms openly. Few if any guerrillas would do this because it would make them targets. Says Walzer, "Soldiers are supposed to protect civilians who stand behind them; guerrillas are protected by civilians among whom they stand."²

² Noted in **Just and Unjust Wars**, Michael Walzer, pp.176-196

PART 2:

The Failures of the Israeli Military Strategy

The IDF, by all accounts, is superior to Hezbollah in funding and firepower. Yet, despite its superiority in strength it has twice failed to uproot Hezbollah. The strategic failings of the Israeli military ventures in Lebanon are many. This section will survey the Israeli strategy in both Lebanese conflicts and look to illustrate failures in four fields; Intelligence, Over Reliance on Airpower, Embrace of Effects Based Operations, and High Civilian Casualties.

Intelligence

There have been numerous lapses in Israeli intelligence when it comes to accurate information on Hezbollah and its armed wing Islamic Resistance. Obstacles emerged for the IDF's General Security Service (GSS) to obtain pertinent data on Hezbollah for a myriad of reasons. Faced with the Palestinian *Intifada* and a potentially nuclear Iran³; the intelligence budget for Lebanon had been cut significantly. After the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah attacks had been largely limited to the disputed Sheba Farms area and the threat level had not been viewed as great. There are numerous factors that led to deteriorated flow of accurate information on the group:

Whether it was do to ranking Hezbollah lower on the intelligence gathering agenda; budget cuts for intelligence gathering in Lebanon; or formidable challenges in agent infiltration into Hezbollah, the gathering capabilities that Israeli intelligence had with regard to the organization, its activities, and deployment were significantly curtailed. The lack of human contacts to provide real time intelligence prevented Israeli intelligence from producing a viable product at the tactical level (Hendel, p.2).

³ Noted in **Failed Tactical Intelligence in the Lebanon War**, Yoaz Hendel

As a result the IDF was in the dark at the beginning of the Second Lebanese War in three crucial intelligence arenas. In regards to weapons; Israel failed to document the enormous traffic of arms from Iran and Syria into Lebanon prior to the war. This left many unknowns as to the type and quality of weapons available to the Islamic Resistance. Despite intelligence reports available that aircraft bringing supplies to the Iran after the massive earthquake in 2005 were returning to Lebanon with weapons; Israel was unclear as to the exact routes of arms supply and transfer blaming geographic distance and strict adherence to communication security on behalf of Hezbollah and Iran.

In regards to forces and command; the IDF had trouble putting an actual size to Hezbollah's membership with figures ranging between 2,000 and 8,000 active supporters. Active membership is reported in the range of 100,000 with the Islamic Resistance itself numbering closer to the Israeli totals. The other critical failure lay in mapping the group's hierarchy and accurately determining its chain of command. Hezbollah has succeeded in keeping all but two (Nassrallah and Mughniyeh) of its top leadership hidden from the Israelis as a response to their assassination campaign and has hidden the command structure of the Party from the GSS.

Finally, in regards to combat and defense tactics; the IDF trained in scenarios largely based on combating conventional force invasions from Arab states and Palestinian terror cells found themselves in an "unfamiliar work environment" when the final deployment of IDF ground forces occurred toward the conclusion of the second war. Simply put Israel was not prepared for the sophistication and training of the Islamic Resistance fighters because intelligence reports underestimated not just their size but depth of training.

Critical failures in intelligence prioritization on behalf of the GSS and strict adherence to communications security on behalf of Hezbollah left the IDF unprepared to deal with the Party once hostilities resumed in 2005. Underestimation is a critical failure in asymmetrical warfare especially when it leads to gross unfamiliarity with the organizational structure of ones adversary.

Reliance on Air Power

The Israeli engagement in the Second Lebanese War was largely limited to air power. The IAF proved quite capable on pin pointing high signature firing of medium range launchers and neutralizing the launchers often before they could finish delivering their payload⁴. The reality is however that while Hezbollah is certain to lose the firing mechanism (the launcher) anytime it fires a medium or long range missile; the IAF has proved incapable of contending with Hezbollah's short range missile batteries where the signature is low, the firing mechanism simple and expendable, and the volume far higher. As long as Islamic Resistance Fighters can set up and fire short range *Katyushas* close to the blue line the IAF can only cope with a part of the missile threat. That is to say, failure to seriously commit ground forces led to a Hezbollah military arm still very much intact and the missile threat undiminished.

Long and Medium Range rockets need to be fired from trucks or installations especially outfitted to fire missiles of this size. Since the Hezbollah rocket campaign is more psychological than material (there were only 42 Israeli civilian casualties over the course of the whole 34 day war⁵); further enlarging its short range arsenal allows

⁴ Noted in **Look Not to the Skies: The IAF vs. Surface to Surface Rocket Launchers**, Noam Ophir, p.5

⁵ IDF official figures

Hezbollah optimum psychological impact in Israel without exposing the lives of its fighters to retaliatory strikes.

Even in the cases where the launcher was identified after the launch, in itself a complicated operation-particularly when dozens of such launchers operate simultaneously in a large area-the question arises whether there was any point in attacking. A launcher of this sort is largely a one-time device. Hezbollah has a limitless supply of these launchers and in contrast with larger launchers stationed on a truck, they are relatively easy to improvise, even in the middle of a war. Was it right to invest resources and effort in attacking a barrel that had launched its load, and was unlikely to be used again by the enemy? The answer is no (Ophir, p.6).

The expectation that the IAF could single-handedly dispatch a highly organized guerrilla army on the ground gave rise to false expectations. The solution to short range launchers is better intelligence and the commitment of ground forces. As long as the Islamic Resistance controls the area from which short range rockets can hit Northern cities; air force retaliation is not an effective deterrent.

The options available are not attractive. Using ground forces to reoccupy Southern Lebanon will alienate Israel in the international community and commit the IDF to a method and theatre of fighting for which Hezbollah is better prepared to inflict substantial casualties. It's the choice between the method that is ineffective and the method for which ones enemy calls the terms of engagement. Being that the Israeli public is not likely to allow a reoccupation of the South due to the risk of life involved the remaining option remains with air power whose limitations we have illustrated above.

Embrace of Effects Based Operations (EBO)

The IDF has zealously embraced the American tactic of EBO. The aim of Effects Based Operations (EBO) is to paralyze the enemy's operational ability in contrast to destroying its military force. According to Col. John Warden, the author of *The Enemy as a System* in which the idea of EBO was first developed; there are three preconditions to

EBO use. First, the enemy has a system-like structure; second, the system has critical junctions; and third, there is sufficient familiarity with the enemy's system and its critical junctions. The EBO system is designed to reduce casualties by using "Shock and Awe" Tactics on key elements of the targeted actor's infrastructure. This could include elimination of the leadership or bombardment of key communications components. This strategy failed with the Israelis for three reasons. First, Israel was unfamiliar with the Islamic Resistance command structure; second, the Islamic Resistance command structure is designed to reduce operational confusion by eliminating critical junctions; and third, failing to utilize ground forces effectively Israel did not neutralize the bulk of Hezbollah's bunkers and fighting groups.

EBO works when coupled with an overwhelming use of force on the ground and Hezbollah has organized itself to function even in a break down occurs in its lines of command. Each sector is organized with the supplies it needs to hold out for long periods of time without needing to be re-supplied or issued orders from a central command. In this way Israel would have to seek out and destroy each and every combat group and not rely on overwhelming aerial force to neutralize its ability to operate.

High Civilian Casualties

The IDF has been less than scrupulous over the years in waging its wars against Hezbollah. Instances like the massacres of civilians at *Sabra* and *Shatilla* (where the IDF allowed the Maronite Christian Militia to massacre 2,000 Palestinian civilians)⁶, the tank barrage at the Qana UN Compound which killed 109 civilians in 1996⁷, and the 1,056

⁶ Noted in **Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terror**, Judith Palmer Harik, pp.64-65

⁷ Noted in **Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance**, Hala Jaber, pp.169-173

Lebanese civilians reportedly killed in Second Lebanese War⁸ have all been turned into overwhelming public relations victories by Hezbollah to paint the IDF as a brutal aggressor. In the Second Lebanese War over 900,000 Lebanese were internally displaced, over 30,000 homes were destroyed in the conflict, and the IAF knocked out critical infrastructure throughout the country to prevent Iran and Syria from resupplying the fighters.

Both Hezbollah and IDF accuse each other of war crimes and of the indiscriminate targeting of civilians. Israel claims that Hezbollah fighters hide weapons and command centers amid civilian neighborhoods and fire rockets from within civilian population centers. And Hezbollah does not deny this at all claiming the basic principles of a guerrilla war. Hezbollah claims that firing rockets at Israeli population centers is a reprisal for murdering civilians. Israel thus finds itself in a difficult situation. It is dealing with a popularly supported guerrilla army that is willingly shielded by the Lebanese masses. Rather than engage in a text book hearts and minds to win Lebanese support for the peace process or its proxies (the former SLA) Israel continues to engage in tactics that lead to the deaths of non-combatants further radicalizing the Lebanese in favor of the Islamic Resistance.

PART 3: The Hezbollah Military Strategy

In retrospect it is safe to say that Israel greatly underestimated the strength of the Hezbollah military arm, Islamic Resistance. Since the IDF withdrew from Lebanon in

⁸ Noted in **Humanitarian Assistance to Lebanon**, United States Agency for International Development, Disaster Assistance (November 3, 2006).

2000, Hezbollah reorganized itself diversifying its military approach from guerrilla assaults and short range rocket attacks to an expanded arsenal of mid to long range missiles that could hit deeper into Israel. As it expanded its operational capabilities Hezbollah also improved upon its communication security and training of its fighters. The result is a guerrilla hybrid organization that is to date the first to stand up to the IDF (twice) and fight to an indecisive standstill. The following are the operational points Hezbollah has embraced.

Advanced Training and Discipline

The armed wing of Hezbollah is divided into two parts; the **Islamic Resistance** and the **Security Organ** which have distinct memberships from the political functions of the Party and operate on a separate command structure. The Islamic Resistance is a guerrilla army used to fight the IDF and the Security Organ is two part apparatus designed to hold Party members accountable for their activities and prevent enemies of Hezbollah from penetrating the Party's structure.

The basic element of Hezbollah's Islamic Resistance hinges around collective leadership interspersed throughout the Shi'a region. Each group is self contained and semi-autonomous. Thus, if one is plucked from the main branch, the others cannot be discovered easily. In structural terms, groups communicate through military sector commanders who in turn communicate through a military regional commander who is usually a member of Hezbollah's military operations headquarters (Hamzeh, p.71).

In this way a central leadership can enforce a strict discipline and chain of command, but regional sectors cannot compromise each other if captured because they are supplied and led by sector leader only familiar with a single regional contact and not with the membership of other sector's fighting groups in their region. Hezbollah keeps discipline like an army but fashions each group like a cell. Organizationally it is a

complicated fusion in of Leninist democratic centralism, Maoist organizational principles, and Jihadist theological reasoning.

The Islamic Resistance is comprised of two sections; the **Enforcement and Recruitment (E&R) Section** and the **Combat Section**. The E & R's responsibility is to instill in the fighters an ideological indoctrination that enforces the religious and political beliefs of the Party; that is to say Pan-Islamic Shi'ism and an understanding of revolutionary martyrdom. It is important to understand the Shi'a religious significance of the Martyrdom of their Imam Husayn: the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad⁹. It is this theological underpinning that Hezbollah has tapped into to link the sectarian religious sympathies of its membership to the broader goals of the political struggle. The E & R Section provide an ideological enforcement of a key concept in the Shi'a faith which is to die for the good of ones community. The one year long ideological training the Section mandates precedes all formal combat instruction⁹.

The Islamic Resistance Combat Section is divided into four organs to which fighters are assigned based on the outcome of a fighter's training. The military training of the Islamic Resistance is facilitated by mobile training camps that are relocated throughout Lebanon. Hezbollah also sends its elite commando to Iran for training in both advanced guerrilla warfare tactics and the use of more sophisticated hardware¹⁰. Islamic Resistance training includes martial arts, marksmanship, medical support, and the use of various weapons.

The first Combat Section Organ consists of what is known as *Istishadiyyun* or Martyrs. Individuals in this organ are willing to under go suicide missions for the

⁹ Noted in **In the Path of Hezbollah**, Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, p.87

¹⁰ Noted in **The Shi'a Revival**, Vali Nasr, p.114-115

resistance. This is not to suggest that Hezbollah endorses or has carried out suicide bombing attacks on civilian population centers. Islamic Resistance martyr operations are ones where the likelihood of survival drops to zero percent: but the tactic has generally taken the form of vehicle bombings of checkpoints or military installations, not nightclubs, bars, and restaurants. While Martyr Operations generally do not target non-combatants; Israeli, American, and French losses from vehicle attacks have had devastating results¹¹.

The second Combat Section Organ includes the commandos of Special Forces: Iranian Revolutionary Guard Trained fighters familiar with a wide range of guerrilla tactics who have distinguished themselves from the rank and file of the Islamic Resistance. While rank and file are trained in Lebanon; Islamic Resistance smuggles the officers of its Special Forces to Iran for training in special military academies. The Special Forces are the backbone of Islamic Resistance's guerrilla striking force and make any Israeli occupation of the South extremely costly via an attrition strategy.

The third Combat Section Organ consists of rocket launchers and specialized weapons operators that form the back bone of Islamic Resistance's retaliatory capabilities. Islamic Resistance rocket groups operate surface-to-surface, surface-to-air, and general artillery batteries concealed across Southern Lebanon in Hezbollah "nature reserves". This Organ is trained to fire its rockets from numerous locations simultaneously to confuse the IAF and make reprisal attacks inefficient.

The fourth Combat Section Organ is composed of regular fighters that handle Islamic Resistance surveillance, logistics, and medical support. This Organ's primary responsibility is to compensate a lack of supply lines with a series of bunker, or "nature

¹¹ Noted in **Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance**, Hala Jaber, p.75-82.

reserves” from which a sector’s fighting groups can be supplied. These four Organs are entirely composed of male Shi’a Muslims extensively screened by the security organ. Their class demographic within Lebanese society is quite wide as there is a relative consensus even among non-Shi’a Lebanese that a member of the Resistance is to be awarded a special social esteem and significance.

If **Islamic Resistance** is the fighting branch of the military arm of Hezbollah, then intelligence is managed by the **Security Organ**. The **Security Organ** is divided into two parts; Party Security (*Amn al-Hizb*) and External Security (*Amn al-Khariji*). The explicit function of both is to prevent foreign and domestic infiltration into Hezbollah and enforce tight internal discipline.

Party Security keeps extensive files on each member of the Party. Party leaders and general membership are required to file operational reports to inform the Party’s Security Organ about the meetings they attend, their contacts, and their relations with all individuals and groups. Failure to file these reports can result in expulsion or arrest. The Party Security’s goal is not only to keep an eye on Hezbollah members, but to have them constantly self evaluating their work and improving their ability to do their job for the Party. Most Hezbollah members file these reports not out of fear but of belief in *takalif al-shari* which is a Shi’a conception of rigid adherence to leadership.

According to Sayyid Nasrallah, “Israel and the United States have made great efforts to penetrate our organizational structure through recruiting party members, promising them money, women, glory, and power positions. Both they [Israel and the United States] were always confronted with rejection because, for Hezbollah’s members, there is a self immunity resulting from faith, religion, and ideological commitment. Accordingly, the synthesis of a powerful security organ plus ideological commitment by party members has made it extremely difficult for the party’s adversaries to succeed in penetrating the party’s iron-gate security (Hamzeh, p.73).

External Security or Encounter Security turns the focus not on party members and Lebanese civilians, but to the activities of foreign countries. The External Security section works closely with Iran's intelligence the *Sava'ma* and maintains cells throughout the Middle East. The External Security section also keeps agents in Cyprus, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, England, the U.S., and Canada. Three Hezbollah agents have been captured inside Israel proper and extensive contact is kept with Palestinian Resistance groups in West Bank and Gaza strip to aid the Palestinian *Intifada*¹² with material support and training. Hezbollah's External Security section has remarkable reach and sophistication for a non-state actor.

What is important to realize in dealing with Hezbollah is that the Party indoctrinates its fighters prior to arming them and that it maintains strict codes of conduct and a rigid yet self critical internal system. This has led to the creation of a military force with a hardened resolve and glorification martyrdom within its ranks. What differentiates this from numerous other Jihadist movements is the technical sophistication of the tactics. Because Hezbollah can rely on Iran for gross material and technical support; the Islamic Resistance has been trained to act as formidable and disciplined military force operating quite like the armed forces of state actor.

Bunker Systems

Since Israel's withdrawal from Southern Lebanon in 2000 Hezbollah has wasted no time in constructing elaborate fortifications throughout the South and building bunker complexes along Israel's Northern border. Hezbollah calls these bunkers "nature reserves".

¹² Noted in **New Rules of the Game**, Daniel Sobelman, pp.84-85

Although it was suspected that Hezbollah was building defensive fortifications, neither the UN peacekeepers nor the Israeli military had any idea as to the scale. When Israeli troops discovered and dynamited one of the bunkers days after the cease-fire, they found a structure consisting of firing positions, operations rooms, medical facilities, lighting and ventilation systems, kitchens and bathrooms with hot water-sufficient for dozens of fighters to live underground for weeks (Blanford, p.7)

Not only do the numerous Hezbollah bunkers allow the Party to conceal its low-signature mobile fleet of short range *Katyusha* rocket launchers, it allows the Islamic Resistance to remain hidden long after the IDF crosses the blue line in an attempt to reoccupy Southern Lebanon. That is to say these sophisticated bunkers build with Iranian funding and technical support¹³ prevent the IDF from effectively neutralizing the Southern command posts of the Islamic Resistance without a protracted occupation and an unacceptable amount of casualties.

The oddest deployment of ground forces took place in the last sixty hours of the fighting. The ground forces were deployed after the political campaign ended (Security Council resolution 1701); in other words, the deployment was not intended to achieve any political objectives. The forces were deployed without the area being cleared of enemy combatants, i.e., the aim was not search, destroy, and inflict damage on Hezbollah's firing capacity or its forces. When the ceasefire came into effect, IDF forces were interspersed with the enemy forces, and hence there were difficulties with land and air supplies (Tira, p.5).

Hezbollah was able to fire over 100 *Katyusha* rockets a day at Northern Israeli cities and Settlements because these bunkers allow them to unveil and quickly fire without the IAF being able to successfully pin point firing locations to neutralize the launcher and crew. The bunker complexes also serve the vital function of concealing the Islamic Resistance Fighters. The several hundred active Hezbollah fighters could never hope to stand a direct confrontation with several Divisions of the IDF. In absence of centralized command or fixed fronts and positions the bunker complex allows fighter units to wait out Israeli advances and attack the Israeli supply lines once the IDF has

¹³ Noted in **Israel's War with Iran**, Ze'ev Schiff, p. 23

passed deeper into Lebanese territory. Basically, the Hezbollah bunker system allows the Party to make the best use of its guerrilla training and assets by forcing the IDF to fight on its terms in a theatre it controls and maintains civilian support¹⁴.

Decentralized Guerrilla Units

Apart from the victims of guerrillas, few still identify irregular paramilitary warfare with terrorism but the two activities do overlap a great deal in their operational characteristics. The tactical logic of guerrilla operations resembles that in terrorist attacks: the weaker rebels use stealth and the cover of the civilian society to concentrate their striking power against one among many of the stronger enemy's dispersed assets; they strike quickly and eliminate the target before the defender can move forces from other areas to respond; they melt back into civilian society to avoid detection and re-concentrate against another target. The government or occupier has far superior strength in terms of conventional military power, but cannot counter-concentrate in time because it has to defend all points, while the insurgent attacker can pick its targets at will (Betts, p.8).

All Hezbollah fighters are mainly civilians that do not stay in the field outside of specific combat engagements. Thus, the Islamic Resistance is a reserve army that is sheltered by the Shi'a population making it even harder for Israel to pinpoint specific members or sector leaders. Islamic Resistance fighters are students at universities, farmers, and professionals in the major cities. Sector leaders can instruct a fighting group's members to report to an Operational Headquarters where they receive their instructions before deployment. Once assembled the group is instructed by a Sector Commander on the specific nature of the operation. Fighters are then armed, uniformed, and put into the field.

Hezbollah has a relatively flat and decentralized organizational structure, and comprises a network of territorial units operating almost autonomously and, generally, without the need for maneuvering forces or transporting supplies. The fighters, weapons, and supplies are deployed in the field in advance and blend easily within the civilian populations or in "nature reserves" (concealed bunker systems in valleys). On the other hand, Hezbollah does not have an operational center of gravity whose destruction would lead to the collapse of the organization's other organs and obviate the need to destroy them individually (Tira, p.4).

¹⁴ Noted in **Breaking the Amoeba's Bones**, Ron Tira, p.6

Except in instances of an Israeli incursion onto Lebanese territory where Hezbollah dons camouflage uniforms and defends fixed positions, Islamic Resistance fighters then are indistinguishable from civilians. Each member only has knowledge of the few other men in his combat group although Hezbollah keeps roughly 10,000 fighters in reserve. Because the Israeli army is trained for large scale engagements with aggressive Arab armies fighting from fixed positions this structure makes it difficult for the IDF to effectively stop Hezbollah because they are not fighting on the same playing field. That is to say Hezbollah maintains an indirect defense.

Rocket Attacks

After the Israeli Operation Grapes of Wrath in 1996; Hezbollah anticipated that Israel had shifted its operational focus to the EBO modal, downplaying large ground force mobilizations, and relying primarily on artillery and air power. In response to the Revolution in Military Affairs, Hezbollah has shifted its primary striking ability to its mobile rocket fleet to strike Israeli cities and settlements. Hezbollah's rocket attacks are launched from three major fighting formations¹⁵.

The force responsible for the bulk of the rocket attacks in the Second Lebanese War were Hezbollah's short-range artillery array which can fire the *Katyusha* rocket at most of Israel's northern cities. The Hezbollah rocket arsenal consists of a rocket force of some 13,000 *Katyusha* rockets, including the 122mm BM-21 rockets capable of hitting targets at a range of 25km. These launchers are easy to move and low signature meaning that retaliatory strikes are hard to deliver because Islamic Resistance Fighters can quickly move and conceal the launcher, or abandon it altogether at little material cost. Few of

¹⁵ Noted in **Hezbollah vs. the IDF: The Operational Dimension**, Amir Kulick, p.3

these short range launchers were destroyed during the fighting which allowed Hezbollah to maintain its 100 Rocket a day quota that was responsible for the evacuation of over 100,000 Israelis from the northern cities. While few casualties resulted from the rocket attacks the psychological impact and paralysis of the Israeli north had a considerable effect of the Israeli masses.

Saturating the area with (short range) rockets, and therefore over recent years Hezbollah stockpiled thousands of Katyusha launchers and rockets. The goal was to ensure a situation whereby Israel's destruction of multiple launchers, even dozens of them, would not inhibit Hezbollah's ability to sustain firepower. Thus, launchers were spread out both in villages and in open areas, and indeed, the organization managed to maintain this formation and continue generating massive fire into Israel throughout the war (Kulick, p.2).

Hezbollah also employed a mid-range artillery formation from positions just south of the Litani River. These launchers fired the mid-range rockets; the Fajr-3 and Fajr-5 which have a range of 45km and 75km respectively. It were these formations that were responsible for the strikes on Haifa, Afula, Beit Shean and southward as the launchers can fire 220 mm Syrian Rockets and extended range *Katyushas*. Israel succeeded in destroying almost every mid-range launcher that was fired as the firing signature was higher and the launchers were harder to move. The psychological impact of these launchers was negated by how quickly they were neutralized¹⁶.

Finally, Hezbollah had two long range rocket formations capable of hitting Tel Aviv and the South located between the Litani River and Beirut which were not utilized during the War. Hezbollah is in possession of 30 some Zelzal-2 missiles which have a range of 100km allowing Hezbollah to hit Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. A Zelzal launcher was attacked and destroyed in Beirut during the Second Lebanese War. These were meant as a deterrent designed to strike Israel's soft underbelly; the coastal region between Haifa and

¹⁶ noted in **Look Not to the Skies: IAF vs. Surface-to-Surface Rocket Launchers**, Noam Ophir p.5

Tel Aviv, but require a more complicated firing mechanism and possibly necessitate direct operation by the Iranian Revolutionary Guardsmen. Hezbollah knows that the signature of firing a Zelzal rocket will lead to IAF destruction of the launch site and thus does not want to use this weapon except as a last resort.

Because the IAF was so successful at eliminating medium and long range launchers Hezbollah is likely to carry out a two-part operational policy in preparation for the next war. Hezbollah realizes the psychological impact on the Israeli public of its rocket attacks and will concentrate its forces in two areas. Namely, Hezbollah will develop and enlarge its guerrilla capacities to hold Southern Lebanon as a launch site and will enlarge its arsenal of rockets to hit further inside of Israel.

The IDF's systematic elimination of mid-range rocket launchers in the region south of the Litani and the (somewhat more limited) damage to the long range rocket array north of the river may push Hezbollah to build a massive infrastructure for arrays North of the Litani, possibly even in Beka'a and north of Beirut. The objective will be to saturate the area with rockets (based on the same logic that has guided Hezbollah in setting up the short range rocket array) in order to compel the air force to operate in multiple areas and thereby increase the array's survivability (Kulick, p.6).

Hezbollah's leaders know that their rocket arsenal is the key to any deterrent capability when dealing with the IDF. As long as they can strike Israeli cities with rocket fire Hezbollah will be able to de-legitimize the Israeli *Knesset's* claims that security can be achieved without an occupation. And as we have demonstrated an occupation puts the IDF right where Islamic Resistance is best prepared to engage them.

PART 4: **The Hezbollah Political Strategy**

To better understand the depth of this conflict we must examine the political dimensions of Hezbollah. While it is the military strategy of the Islamic Resistance that

earns Hezbollah attention in the media it is the political steps it makes on the ground that ensure its continued loyalty from not just the Shi'a but numerous confessions within Lebanese society. It is these functions that make Hezbollah far more multifaceted than simply being a guerrilla army; Hezbollah is a state within a state.

Foreign Sponsorship

Iran and Syria have long term policy interests in a strong and militarily formidable Party and both countries have been formative in nurturing and supplying Hezbollah with anything it needs¹⁷. Both Damascus and Tehran have facilitated various forms of support to the Party as a means of power projection in Lebanon and in pursuit of their common enemy Israel. Over the years Hezbollah has made use of both foreign aid and training as a surrogate while it maintains its long term goal of an Islamic state in Lebanon.

Syria is not interested in another head-on military clash with Israel that it is certain to once again lose. Its support for Hezbollah falls in three main areas of concern. First, Hezbollah serves as a thorn in Israel's side and reminder over the annexed Golan Heights that Syria seeks to keep in the focus of any peace settlement with Israel. Second, cross border war is bad for the Lebanese economy which in turn could displace the hundreds of thousands of Syrian workers in Lebanon. War by proxy minimizes this risk. Third, Syrian provoked wars with Israel further tarnish the Syrian relationship with the Lebanese people while working through Hezbollah promotes pro-Syrian policies from an indigenous party¹⁸.

¹⁷ Noted in **From Conflict Management to Conflict Resolution**, Edward Djerejian, p.2

¹⁸ Noted in **New Rules of the Game**, Daniel Sobelman, pp.47-48

From the very beginning in 1982 Iran's Revolutionary Guards supplied Hezbollah with the material and ideological support it needed to grow as an organization. As Hezbollah's skill and arsenal developed it continued to rely on Iran for the tools it needed for its war with Israel. A product of the "export the revolution" policies of Khomeini; Hezbollah is dependant on Iran for all of its arms and much of its funding. Lebanon is home to the largest Shi'a Arab community second to Iraq and Hezbollah gives Iranian policy a platform in Lebanon.

Both Syria in the way of logistics and Iran in the way of funding seek to use Hezbollah as their proxy in Lebanon. The Party over the years has exploited this reality to its advantage retain its own autonomy in voice and operations.

Social Programs

Hezbollah's Social Unit is responsible for a vast network of social welfare programs that form the foundation of the Party's ability to serve as a state within a state. While Hezbollah's armed wing relies on the population to aid and conceal its members from the Israeli forces; the population of the *dariyeh*, the Beka'a Valley, and Southern Lebanon rely on Hezbollah for the majority of their social services. No other Lebanese faction or the government itself comes close to providing services of this magnitude and it is these services that win Hezbollah the crucial support of the Shi'a Muslim population¹⁹.

The Hezbollah Social Unit directs the work of four semi-autonomous organizations that provide for the Lebanese people. The most prominent is called *Holy Struggle Construction Foundation (Mu'assat Jihad al-Bina)*. Between 1988 and 2002 the

¹⁹ Noted in **The Shi'a Revial**, Vali Nasr, pp.232-233.

foundation worked on over 10,000 projects ranging from hospitals, to school, homes, mosques, and agricultural cooperatives²⁰. In the aftermath of the sixth Arab-Israeli war it was the foundation that was almost solely responsible for the rebuilding of homes and infrastructure destroyed in Israeli air raids.

The foundation also provides electricity and potable water to its constituency. 45% of the *dariyeh's* water supply is pumped by the foundation²¹. It installs power generators throughout the areas Hezbollah controls and during periods of crisis has provided round the clock refilling of the water reservoirs it has installed with a fleet of tanker trucks with generators mounted on them to allow citizens to pump water from private cisterns.

The *Martyrs Foundation (Mu'assasat al-Shahid)* is a charity established to provide for the families of Hezbollah fighters killed in battle. This foundation provides the children of dead Hezbollah soldiers with education and healthcare and since its inception in 1982 has provided for 2,000 families and fourteen hundred children via its programs. Over the years the foundation has provided job assistance, vocational training, health services, and counseling for the families of those killed fighting for the Party.

The *Foundation for the Wounded (Mu'assasat al-Jarha)* and the *Khomeini Support Committee (Lujnat Imdad al-Khomeini)* both serve as welfare agencies for civilians hurt during the civil war and conflict with Israel. The Party pays to put thousands of students through school, provide medical care tens of thousands, and rebuild the lives of the downtrodden in war torn society.

The activities of Hezbollah's Social Unit emanate from a strong ideological commitment because social service is a fundamental tenet of faith. This committee has contributed to the

²⁰ Hamzeh, p.50

²¹ Noted in **Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terror**, Judith Palmer Harik, p.85

success of Hezbollah in boosting the size of its constituency and its skillful penetration of Lebanon's society, in particular the Shi'a community. While the Lebanese government has almost ceased to offer social welfare services, Hezbollah has been delivering such services, thus increasing its popularity at the expense of both the Lebanese government and Amal Movement (Hamzeh, p.53).

Across the board Hezbollah has skillfully implemented programs via its four principle foundations along with units of the Party directed specifically toward Education and Islamic Health. These Social Programs are the most valuable weapon the Hezbollah arsenal because they win the hearts and minds of the Shi'a masses who gladly sacrifice for the Party.

Grassroots Advocacy

Hezbollah has earned a reputation for championing its vastly underserved Shi'a Muslim constituency. During the period of the civil war and after Hezbollah has created fact finding teams to bring government and international attention to the crisis of poverty and subsequent interventions. Beginning in 1991 over the issue of water pumping to the *dariyeh*; Hezbollah began organizing committees on issue specific grievances to make facts better available to its representatives in Parliament and its social service providers like *Jihad al-Bina*. These fact finding teams equip the Party's governmental representatives with the facts they need to lobby for badly needed social services and allow the numerous Hezbollah social service providers to reach out to who needs their help the most. This service of actively seeking out the exact conditions of their constituency, coupling a grassroots analysis and a material support solution with a practical plan of national political action is a cornerstone of the numerous Hezbollah campaigns and mobilizations²².

²² Noted in **Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terror**, Judith Palmer Harik, pp

The grass roots organizing that Hezbollah engages in has led to a large and well organized staff that can stage large demonstrations to bring attention to Hezbollah domestic policy and regional issues. The Party can put large numbers of people into the streets for sustained periods of time and this have been an invaluable tool in bringing attention to the Party's political demands.

Use of Information Technology

Hezbollah has benefited from its sophisticated amalgamation of guerrilla warfare and the use of information technology. Its extensive coverage of not only its own guerrilla operations, but of conflicts in the region has made its television station one of the most popular in the region. *Al-Manar (The Beacon)* satellite television station, four radio stations, and five newspapers serve as the broad based propaganda effort to win Muslim hearts and minds. While aimed at a solid Shi'a audience,

It offered a muscular mixture of revolution and religion. However, with news bulletins, political commentaries, and announcements of martyrdoms and casualties, including those of the Israeli army and the SLA. Supplemented by clips of resistance activities shot on site by al-Manar's intrepid flak-jacketed, camouflaged cameramen, Hezbollah has brought the battle against Israeli home in uncompromising fashion. For the first time in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1948, Arabs and Muslims have seen Israeli soldiers inflicted with death and injuries at the hands of Hezbollah's Islamic Resistance (Hamzeh, p.59)

Run by an Information Unit created by Hezbollah to disseminate information on the movement's behalf, al-Manar and the numerous other Hezbollah media outlets serve the dual role of a people's news network and psy-ops campaign on their Israeli enemy²³. Hezbollah gives a voice to radical Islamic organizations both Sunni and Shi'a to broadcast their message and struggle to the Muslim masses. During the second Palestinian Intifada which began in 2000 al-Manar broadcasted some of the most

²³ noted in: Hezbollah and the Morning After, Yoram Schweitzer, p.4

extensive coverage of the uprising along with recycled clips of the Islamic Resistance fighting Israel during the Lebanese occupation as a veritable how to for the Palestinian fighters. Rejecting over 400 years of sectarian infighting the Shi'a programming of al-Manar was expanded to give Sunni Islamists and leftist Palestine leaders' free airtime to voice their ideological doctrines and Resistance strategies. Coupled with the training and support Hezbollah has extended to the Palestinian resistance organization Islamic Jihad and Hamas; this was the continuation of the post Iranian revolution trend of Shi'a support for Sunni resistance coming from a position of comparative strength²⁴.

Hezbollah also uses al-Manar and its other outlets to do segments in Hebrew designed to demoralize the Israeli public and convince IDF soldiers of the futility of Israeli occupations and aggression. This sophisticated psy-ops campaign has included television slots in Hebrew with names like; "Who's Next" and "The Upside down Picture". Hezbollah explained to the Israeli public that *Katyusha* rocket attacks on Israel's northern cities and settlements were a direct reprisal for civilian casualties in Lebanon²⁵ and ran a constantly updated photo gallery of dead Israeli soldiers with a blank space and question mark for who the next casualty would be.

Hezbollah cameramen often filmed right at the confrontation point. This left no doubt about what tactics were being used against the Israelis and backed up (Hezbollah's) report that Hezbollah's targets were military personnel inside Lebanon, not innocent Israeli civilians. Besides the obvious damage to the enemies' morale, the television coverage also boosted Hezbollah's national, Arab and Islamic revolutionary images to all-time highs in a region searching for heroes (Harik, p.133).

In 2003 Hezbollah released a video-game for Muslim children called Special Force; a first person shooter in which one can play an Islamic Resistance fighter and the enemies are IDF soldiers. Assassination missions on Israeli politicians can also be

²⁴ Noted in **Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam**, p.127

²⁵ Noted in **Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism**, Judith Palmer Harik, p.132

undertaken. The game operates on a Genesis 3D engine and has sold over 100,000 copies throughout the Middle East. The game can be played in English, French, Arabic, and Persian and is another example of Hezbollah's sophistication in understanding modern trends and delivering its message with the latest technologies.

The tangible result of al-Manar and its numerous print and radio satellites is the enforcing of an anti-Israeli socialization process for its Muslim viewers and a direct message to the Israeli public portraying the resistance fighters as individuals with no fear of death²⁶. If the tactic of imbedding Party journalists to film operations enthralled the Muslim masses with resistance fever it served well the second vital purpose of horrifying the Israeli public and turning Israelis against the Wars in Lebanon.

Conclusion

To anyone who seeks to objectively look at Hezbollah there can be no denying that the Party has won many tangible victories against Israel. These victories are the result of an integrated military and political strategy that takes an indirect approach to Israeli attacks while maintaining population support via social programs. It is the careful fusion of a guerrilla army with the trappings of state. Looking again at Walzer; anytime Israel fights Hezbollah, Israel is fighting the nation of Lebanon because attempting to destroy Hezbollah is to destroy the only viable social welfare structure the poor of Lebanon have.

In terms of military sophistication Hezbollah poses a serious threat. Not in that it can physically destroy Israel, but in that it can lead to repeated instances of future regional destabilization. In this sense Hezbollah is a regional military force that needs further consideration and a great deal of better intelligence gathering on how it works.

²⁶ Noted in **Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance**, Hala Jaber, p.90

In terms of political sophistication Hezbollah could in the not so distant future be the governing party of Lebanon and this would put an uncompromising Islamist regime on Israel's Northern border. This integration into mainstream Lebanese Israeli politics is a mirror of what the Hamas Movement achieved last year. It is the logic of picking radicals who can provide a stable society over secular and corrupt bureaucrats who won't. If anything Hezbollah cannot be ignored any longer. Its emergence is the evolution of the Jihadist Movement from terrorism to state craft or perhaps a fusion of the two. Hezbollah over the last thirty years has demonstrated the sustainability of asymmetrical warfare and is theoretical modal for the future of what non-state actors might do when properly organized and funded.

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