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## Hezbollah - Terrorist or Not?

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# **HEZBOLLAH – TERRORIST OR NOT?**

by

**Erin E. Forsberg**

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
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**Approved:**

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## **HEZBOLLAH – TERRORIST OR NOT?**

Determining whether or not an organization such as Hezbollah is or is not a terrorist group is a rather arduous process, especially since the international community can not agree. However, due to the reasons why Hezbollah was first organized and the group's involvement in the Lebanese political system, along with its network of social services, Hezbollah is not a terrorist organization. In order to prove such a bold statement, the first step must undoubtedly be to come up with a workable and effective definition of terrorism that is hopefully free from moral implications. The second step would be to see how the organization and its history fit into said definition. However, in order to formulate this workable definition of terrorism, it is essential to begin with an analysis of the definitions others have used, or are using, for terrorism.

There are over 100 known and widely used definitions of "terrorism", which makes it rather difficult for various governmental groups and political bodies to come to any kind of agreement as to what terrorism actually is. Many have begun to think that what is termed terrorism all depends on what side of the fence you happen to sit on. In fact, there are political scientists and analysts out there that have given great discourse on how to define terrorism, only to come up with some parameters of what terrorism is not, but they have not been able to agree even within themselves as to what terrorism actually is. On the other hand, there are governmental organizations that have defined terrorism, but their definitions are vague or intended to somehow suit their mission goals. Of the many definitions out there, some are noteworthy for discussion when attempting to come up with a sound definition of terrorism.

The U.S. Department of Defense's (DOD) definition is one such definition. They define terrorism as, "The calculated use of unlawful violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious,

or ideological” (NSA Public Affairs and Communications email). Though this definition does include fear as being an important aspect of terrorism, it does not mention that the threat of violence may be as equally coercive as actual violence. The DOD also does not make any attempt to say whether or not attacks on military personnel, combatant or not, are distinguished as terrorism (Hoffman, p. 33). It should be noted that this definition covers all three major goal areas – political, religious and ideological – which are all important to recognize.

As relatively vague as the DOD’s definition seems, the one in use by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is even more so. The CIA states that terrorism is, “...premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience” (Central Intelligence Agency). The main flaw in this definition is that the violence of terrorist organizations may not always be politically motivated. History has proven that religion and ideology may be the driving forces of some terrorist groups. For example, Al Qaeda has religious based reasons for declaring jihad (holy war) against the United States and others who are deemed “infidels”, or those not pious enough in their practice of Islam, or lack thereof, by their standards.

The FBI, of course, has its own definition while at the same time recognizing that there “... is no single, universally accepted definition of terrorism” (Federal Bureau of Investigation). Terrorism, for their purposes, is defined as “... the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (FBI). The term “unlawful” under this definition means an act in violation of U.S. laws and includes coercing or influencing civilians or even the policies of governments by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping (FBI). Interestingly, this definition includes assassination as a means of terrorism. Assassination could

surely influence the policies of governments, especially if their leaders are being killed. This definition also steers clear of saying whether or not a state is capable of conducting terrorism. For that reason, the FBI definition could be declared hypocritical given the fact that the U.S. has conducted covert operations intended to assassinate government officials with their intentions being to influence governments, societies, or policies. The stipulation about acts of terrorism having to be in violation of U.S. laws could also become a dire complication when having to deal with countries that have laws that differ, especially when discussing extradition of known perpetrators. Regardless of these complications, the definition does mention that such violations may occur against property. Property that is meaningful to a population, such as a sacred place, possibly could have as much coercive power when attacked as an attack on actual living targets may have.

Unlike the American FBI, CIA and DOD, MI5 of the United Kingdom has adapted their definition of terrorism to what they feel is the current threat (UK Secretary of State). Currently, MI5 has determined that terrorism is derived from loose-knit networks that lack a conventional structure. Terrorists typically have connections around the world and are "...bound by shared extremist views or experiences" (MI5). They are also inspired by global messages and/or figureheads that are uncompromising and assert "... that the West represents a threat to Islam" and that this religion and democracy are incompatible (MI5). Methods of attack in use by terrorists are explosive devices, shootings, kidnappings, surface to air missiles, Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) devices and there are other forms of attack through infiltration of information and intelligence centers (MI5). Being that this definition focuses on Islamic fundamentalist terrorists and their methods, it leaves out the possibility of defining other more politically and secularly motivated groups as terrorists. However, the fact that MI5 opts for a

terrorism definition that revolves around what they see as the current threat does seem to prove how important “threat” actually may be while defining terrorism.

Definitions from others besides governmental agencies should also be considered when one tries to determine a definition of terrorism. Many political scientists, analysts and others have come up with their own versions as to what “terrorism” actually is and when and when not to label it as such. John Richard Thackrah has listed many definitions from various authors in his book, *Dictionary of Terrorism, Second Edition*, that are worthy of mention.

One such definition is that from C.J.M. Drake. He defined terrorism as, “the recurrent use or threatened use of politically motivated and clandestinely organised violence, by a group whose aim is to influence a psychological target in order to make it believe in a way which a group desires” (Thackrah, p. 67). Drake’s definition includes both the use and threat of violence as important for influencing a target audience. He also has deemed that the target is not those physically affected by the violence, but those that would be psychologically affected. His mention of “clandestinely organized” could be interpreted as the violence, or threat of violence, is premeditated. Like the CIA, Drake has determined that the violence is politically motivated, which may not be necessarily true for the reasons aforementioned. However, it is understandable how Drake and the CIA came to their conclusions on terrorism being politically motivated. It is possible that they are confusing motivation with goals. It seems that even religious fundamentalist groups with entirely religious motivations will ultimately have at least some political goals, such as establishing an entirely Islamic state. Beyond that, terrorism will affect politics of countries regardless of motivations.

Some, like V. Herman and R. van der Laan Bouma, have embraced the thought that regardless of motivations, terrorists have political demands. Their definition is, “Non-

governmental terrorism is the considered and systematic use of widespread offensive violence, murder, and destruction aimed at governmental employees and the general population as well as public and private property, to force individuals, groups, communities, economic entities and governments to modify or change their actual proposed behaviour and policies so as to concede to the terrorists' political demands" (Thackrah, p. 68). Like the FBI definition, this one includes the importance of attacks on property as well as attacks on populations. It could be assumed that a prime target for a terrorist would be a piece of property that is both heavily populated and meaningful to the target population, for example the World Trade Center. Also, like some of the others, this definition mentions that the acts of violence need to be "considered," or premeditated, supposing that an act of violence that wasn't premeditated would be reactionary or even accidental and therefore unable to be labeled as terrorism. It should also be noted that this seems to be a modernized definition of terrorism due to the fact that it includes economic entities along with the standard targets. Economic entities have become increasingly important due to globalization, and they often hold the power to influence governments and to help or hurt the economies of countries.

Unlike the previous definition, those like R. Clutterbuck feel that when defining terrorism, the motivations behind the acts are almost more important than the acts themselves, who and what the attacks are on, or what the attacks hope to achieve. Clutterbuck states that, "Terrorism is the recourse of a minority or even of a single dissident frustrated by the inability to make society shift in a desired direction by what that society regards as 'legitimate' means" (Thackrah, p. 67). This definition does give some insight into what a person turned terrorist may feel and what may drive them to such extremes. It may even explain why societies with high levels of social mobility and opportunities to participate in political processes may not breed

many terrorists, but could be susceptible to attacks. What this definition lacks, however, is anything that would help to differentiate between terrorists, guerillas and revolutionaries. They all tend to feel that their actions are the only recourse when they do not see legitimate means as an option.

Just as Clutterbuck has given a more sociological view in defining terrorism, so has J.S. Roucek. "Sociologically, terror is a person or thing or practice that causes intense fear or suffering, whose aim is to intimidate, subjugate, especially as a political weapon or policy. Politically, its main function is to intimidate and disorganise the government through fear, and through this political changes can be achieved" (Thackrah, p. 69). Granted, the definitions discussed up to this point have shown that fear/intimidation is an important factor in terrorism to achieve the psychological effects needed for coercion, but questions are raised on its main function being to disorganize government. Herman and van der Laan Bouma had pointed out in their definition that the intended targets for terrorism need not only be governments. Without peering deeper into Roucek's definition, that does appear to be a flaw. Yet, by attacking societies, populations, economic entities and the like, a terrorist may actually be causing an intended residual effect of disorganizing a government. Fear can cause a society to cry out to their governments for protection and/or change. In some cases, when the society calls out for protection by the government and it fails to do so, the society will then call for a change in government. Individuals in governments may even disagree on plans of action to fend off further acts of terrorism that could cause fragmentation from within and ultimately, disorganization.

There is one rather lengthy definition out there that, although not perfect, is relatively thorough and includes many aspects of the previously analyzed definitions. This definition is from the Memorial Institute for Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) and states that, "Terrorism is



violence, or the threat of violence, calculated to create an atmosphere of fear and alarm. These acts are designed to coerce others into actions they would not otherwise undertake, or refrain from actions they desired to take. All terrorist acts are crimes. Many would also be in violation of the rules of war if a state of war existed. This violence or threat of violence is generally directed against civilian targets. The motives of all terrorists are political, and terrorist actions are generally carried out in a way that will achieve maximum publicity. Unlike other criminal acts, terrorists often claim credit for their acts. Finally, terrorist acts are intended to produce effects beyond the immediate physical damage of the cause, having long-term psychological repercussions on a particular target audience. The fear created by terrorists may be intended to cause people to exaggerate the strengths of the terrorist and the importance of the cause, to provoke governmental overreaction, to discourage dissent, or simply to intimidate and thereby enforce compliance with their demands” (MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, Glossary). This definition, like the CIA’s, may be confusing motivations with goals in claiming that “...the motives of all terrorists are political...” (MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, Glossary). Again, it may be difficult to completely separate any goals of terrorists from politics, but there is no doubt that what drives a terrorist could be purely religious, or social, or political. This is also the first definition discussed that mentions the use of publicity. Achieving “maximum publicity” has often proven important for terrorists to spread the word of their plight. However, it should be recognized that the use of media is a double-edged sword for terrorists. On the one side, they can make their arguments, goals and demands public knowledge to help coerce the wanted changes. But, on the other side of the sword, people around the world also gain access to view the pain and destruction that the violent acts may cause, which may make people sympathize with the population or government that was attacked instead of with the terrorists. Another

interesting aspect of the MIPT definition is that most terrorist acts would "...be in violation of the rules of war if a state of war existed" (MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base/Glossary). This eliminates self defense and violence against combatants as being labeled terrorism. In some cases, it may even disallow labeling attacks against non-combatant government officials as terrorism due to the fact that those are often the ones who hand down the missions to the combatants, qualifying them as pseudocombatants. Overrunning command posts is a common and useful military tactic in times of war, but usually under the rules of war those in the command post are taken prisoner, not killed.

Defining terrorism is a difficult task, especially since the dynamics of terrorist organizations have changed greatly over the years and since there is no one widely used definition. It seems as though even different governmental departments and bureaus within the same country disagree on certain aspects of what terrorism is, further demonstrating the actual level of difficulty in defining terrorism. As P. Taylor stated in 1993, "Terrorism is one of the most emotive and subjective words in the English language. It is a value judgment in itself" (Thackrah, p. 70). It additionally complicates things when terrorist organizations do not classify themselves as such, which they almost never do. They and their supporters view themselves as freedom fighters, martyrs and/or revolutionaries that are fighting for what they feel is a just cause, and on the other side of the fence, it just may be.

For that reason, some authors in their failed attempts to define terrorism have come up with what terrorism is not. Bruce Hoffman, in his book *Inside Terrorism*, is one such writer. After some discourse, he could not come up with an actual definition of terrorism, but did offer some distinctions between terrorists, guerilla groups and insurgents. To Hoffman, the term guerilla "...is taken to refer to a numerically larger group of armed individuals, who operate as a

military unit, attack enemy military forces, and seize and hold territory (even if only ephemerally during daylight hours), while also exercising some form of sovereignty over a defined geographical area and its population” (Hoffman, p. 35). To add to Hoffman’s concept of guerillas, Charles Townshend has stated that, “...guerilla operations, however ‘unconventional’ by regular military criteria, work by normal military logic” (Townshend, p. 4). Guerillas seem to mostly attack combatant forces that they believe have invaded a territory that they feel they have some type of jurisdiction over, which is a major difference from terrorists who appear to usually attack non-combatant people or property. “The essence of terrorism, by contrast, is the negation of combat. Its targets are attacked in a way that inhibits (or better prohibits) self-defence” (Townshend p. 4). It should, however be recognized that guerillas may at times use terror tactics (hit and run style of engagement of enemy forces), which could be misconstrued as terrorism.

Insurgents, on the other hand, seek more political goals instead of military ones. Hoffman has determined that “...insurgencies typically involve coordinated informational (e.g. propaganda) and psychological warfare efforts designed to mobilize popular support in a struggle against an established national government, imperialist power, or foreign occupying force” (Hoffman, p. 35). The problem with Hoffman’s distinction of insurgency from terrorism is really a lack thereof. The main distinction may be that insurgent movements could be more highly coordinated efforts than those of terrorists, but Hoffman is unclear about that as it is more implied than stated.

On the other hand, John Richard Thackrah offers a slightly clearer definition of insurgency. “In its most general sense insurgency is a struggle between a non-ruling group and the ruling authorities, in which the former consciously employs political resources

(organisational skills, propaganda or demonstrations or both) and instruments of violence to establish legitimacy for some aspect of the political system which the ruling authorities consider illegitimate... Insurgents seek through violent means to separate themselves from existing arrangements and to establish a separate political community... Basically, it is a crisis about political legitimacy” (Thackrah, p. 127). Unlike terrorism, it seems that insurgency is about attacking the ruling group with whom the insurgents have discord in order to gain some form of political legitimacy, even if done by using terror tactics. Terrorists, on the other hand, will attack civilians and international non-combatant targets in order to coerce their target audience. They may not be seeking political legitimacy, but rather other forms of change such as the destruction of Israel or a purely Islamic state. Insurgency could be the “thing” that covers the definitional middle ground between guerrillas and terrorists.

Since up to this point, analyses have been given on several definitions of terrorism and what terrorism is not, it is time to attempt the creation of a sound definition of what terrorism is. Terrorism is the premeditated use or threat of violence carried out by loosely organized subnational groups or clandestine agents in order to cause fear through which coercion can take place. The target is far beyond those who are actually caught up in the act. The true target is a psychological audience that the terrorists intend to influence in such a way that they take the actions desired by the terrorists, thereby changing behaviors or policies. These targets may be an individual, group, community, economic entity or government and are definitely non-combatant, with the terrorists often being non-discriminatory as to who is killed, hurt or taken hostage. The intended goals are usually political or have political ramifications, but motivations may be political, religious or ideological or some combination thereof. In order to claim that an act is terrorism, it must be purely offensive and a state of war must not already exist. Also, another

fairly common aspect of terrorism is that the perpetrators will often stake a claim on the wrongdoings they commit, unlike most common criminals that attempt to hide the fact that they ever committed a crime. It is fairly obvious that this definition employs many of the aspects of the aforementioned definitions, but hopefully it is phrased in such a way as to eliminate the flaws.

Now that a working definition of terrorism has been established, discussion is open as to how a group such as Hezbollah does or does not fit into such a categorization. What makes the group interesting for definitional purposes is that there is not an international consensus as to whether it is or is not a terrorist organization. Complicating the discussion further is that there are two “wings” of Hezbollah – security and political. The United States, Canada, and Israel all strictly classify the organization as terrorist. Russia does not consider Hezbollah terrorist at all, while the United Kingdom and Australia distinguish between the two wings when making an attempt at classification. The only true way to come up with whether or not Hezbollah is a terrorist organization is to study its actions and history as analyzed within the context of the workable definition of terrorism (MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, Group Profile).

The history of Hezbollah actually begins before the real formation of the organization. Turmoil in the region began when statehood was declared for Israel, taking up a piece of Palestine, on May 15, 1948. As a result, a conglomerate of Arab armies battled Israel in an attempt to reclaim the lost territory. However, by 1949, the Arab attempt had failed, with Israel occupying an extra 2,000 square miles. After giving some of that excess land to Egypt and Jordan, hopes of establishing an actual Palestinian state were essentially crushed (Byers, P. 12). The Arab armies fought several wars with Israel, resulting in Israeli occupation of more Arab or Palestinian land. This, of course, led many Palestinians to flee the land now claimed by Israel,

and they headed into Arabic countries. These Arabic countries for the most part would not grant citizenship to the displaced people, thereby forcing them into refugee camps to live in poverty (Byers, pp. 13-14). Many camps were placed in southern Lebanon, as its Maronite Catholic led government had opted to not participate in the wars.

All the while the Arabs were fighting Israel, the situation of the Lebanese government was growing intense. When Lebanon was granted independence from the French mandate in 1943, it was decided to run the government in accordance with sectarian proportions as determined by the 1932 census. At that time, the majority of Lebanese were of the Maronite Catholic Sect, then the Sunni Muslim sect, and then the Shi'ite Muslim sect which only comprised one-fifth of Lebanon's population. It should be noted that there are over 16 religious sects present in the small country, but they are often lumped into Christian or Muslim categories. So, under the 1943 National Pact, it was determined the President of Lebanon was to be Maronite, with the Prime Minister being Sunni, which left a position of lesser political authority- the Chairmanship of the Parliament- to the Shi'ites (Harris, p. 81). The Parliament itself was to be composed of half Christians and half Muslims (Palmer Harik, p. 17). The economy was to be a free market service economy, which happened to work wonderfully for the elites who were disproportionately Christians (Harris, p. 126). The more urban Christians and even some Sunni Muslims were benefiting from modernization, while the merchant republic was failing to integrate the periphery areas consisting of mainly Shi'ite populations (Harris, p. 134).

The social problems of Lebanon were only exacerbated by the Arab-Israeli wars and the influx of Palestinian refugees, whose numbers reached 200,000 by 1970 (Byers, p. 15). The Palestinians, who were 85% majority Shi'ite Muslim, had no army and few weapons, but they were angry and sought to avenge Israel (Byers, p. 14). The conditions in the refugee camps,

along with their close proximities to Israel, became a breeding ground and an attraction for militant organizations.

One of those organizations was the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), whose aim was to oust Israel from Palestine. Jordan had previously been a passive supporter and the home of the PLO, until Israel raided the PLO camps there in 1970 (Harris, pp. 154-155). Apparently, Israel's raids hit a little too close to home, so the Jordanians expelled the PLO. To further its pursuit against Israel, the PLO opted for relocation in Lebanon.

As Israeli-Palestinian clashes continued, taking place in southern Lebanon with the efforts of groups like the PLO, Shi'ites were forced to flee to Beirut. The Maronites began to feel the political order was threatened as the Shi'ite population was growing towards one-third of the country's total population, making it the majority, and were closing in on the capitol (Harris, p. 158). All during this time, the government was failing to provide the Shi'ites with social services, security, or increased political representation (Palmer Harik, p. 19). With the increasing population, the growth of militia groups, and the lack of government response to demands, a civil war was bound to happen.

By 1975, the discord between the Maronites and the Muslims had grown to the point that Muslims banded together to overthrow the Maronite government through civil war (Byers, p. 15). As nothing is simple in that region, other countries became involved in the Lebanese internal strife. Israel logically opted to support the Maronites, in hopes that they would keep their ally that had opted out of the Arab-Israeli wars. Oddly, Syria also sided with the Maronites for two reasons. The first was that there was fear that if any other sect gained control of the Lebanese government, Israel would invade and take over the small country (Byers, p. 15). The other reason was that they hoped to assert some control over Lebanon and the weakened

Christian government, thereby helping to gain ground against Israel in the long run along with some bargaining power with other countries.

Some interesting events occurred during the Lebanese civil war. For one thing, the Lebanese army essentially disintegrated as its members split off into the Muslim or Christian militias (Palmer Harik, P. 18). This opened the door for Syria to send its own troops into Lebanon to assist the Maronite government. Normally, their support of a Christian government would create some cognitive dissonance for those who know much about Syria. However, Syria was planning to uphold the original 1943 National Pact governmental structure of Lebanon in order to gain a positive response from Israel's ally – the United States (Harris, p. 164). It could be possible that Syria was putting on a good face for the U.S. so that they would not come in along side of Israel and decimate the country. The Syrian goal of ridding the region from Israel should not be forgotten, because if Israel gained Lebanon it could have been detrimental to their underlying objective.

Further, at the end of Lebanon's internal crisis, a shaky Maronite government was upheld with the Syrians maintaining their presence at the request of the government (Byers, p. 15). Southern Lebanon was essentially left alone, allowing a place for disaffected Muslim and Palestinian militias to hide, grow and continue anti-Israeli operations. One of those groups was, of course, the PLO. It resumed its focus on Israel in October of 1976, eventually provoking Israel to cross the southern border of Lebanon in an attempt to demolish the PLO. In 1978, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) crossed into Lebanon to fight with the PLO, but they failed to rid the area of them. However, the South Lebanese Army (SLA), a Christian militia that aided the Israelis, did manage to secure a six to twelve mile strip of territory in southern Lebanon (Byers, p. 17). Regardless, the skirmishes at the border failed to end.



Undoubtedly, Israel would not feel safe as long as the PLO had a presence along the border. What made that fear volatile was the election, in June of 1981, of new Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon. Sharon, who was thought of as a moderate, partly wanting to dispose of the PLO threat and partly wanting to show that he had a tough side, came up with a "grand plan" (Harris, p. 173). This scheme entailed destroying the PLO, fighting even as far north as Beirut, pushing the Syrian occupiers out at the same time, and securing an Israeli endorsed Maronite, Bashir Jummayyil, as President in the 1982 Lebanese elections (Harris, p. 173). And so the large scale invasion began on June 6<sup>th</sup> of 1982. As long as the PLO continued its strikes, the IDF attacked them. By August 14<sup>th</sup>, the IDF had chased the PLO north into Beirut and the PLO did weaken, with most of their forces leaving by September 1<sup>st</sup> (Byers, p. 18). Regardless of this victory, Israel rightly feared that groups similar to the PLO would rise or locate themselves in southern Lebanon, so they created a "security zone" to be occupied by the IDF and their SLA assistants that was within Lebanese territory (Byers, p. 18).

Israel was correct in their assumption that other groups would rise to replace the PLO as an aggressor against them. As a matter of fact, there were already a couple there, planning to take over southern Lebanon in the absence of the PLO. Amal, the parent of Hezbollah, was one such group that had arisen as Shi'ite Muslims banded together in hopes of asserting themselves in Lebanese politics to better the plight of their people (Byers, p. 20). The problem was that Israel did not leave after defeating the PLO. They remained as occupants of Southern Lebanon, opening the door to the radicalization of disaffected Shi'a Muslims through occurrences elsewhere in the region.

For the fate of southern Lebanon, the Israeli occupation was important, but there was another incident in the region that greatly added to Shi'a mobilization. There was a revolution in

Iran which occurred in 1979 that would forever change the Muslim world (Palmer Harik, p. 16). The secular Shah was overthrown, emplacing the Shi'ite Ayatollah Khomeini as the Islamic ruler. Iran thus became a true Shi'a Islam republic. A few young mullahs (Shi'ite clerics) that had been members of Amal identified with the ideology behind the revolution, feeling that the religious goals were more important than Amal's more secular ones (Byers, pp. 20-21). Hence, due the influence of the Iranian Revolution, along with Israel's forced occupation in southern Lebanon which aided the radicalization of a few young mullahs, Hezbollah was born.

Hezbollah (also known as Hizbullah, Hizballah, Hizbollah, Islamic Jihad, Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine, Organization of the Oppressed on Earth, Revolutionary Justice Organization and the Party of God) fell under the influence of Iran's Ayatollah. Iran had a vision of expanding Islam beyond its borders, and this created a need to expel Israel from the region and made it optimal to utilize a militant organization such as Hezbollah to assist in the fight (Palmer Harik, p. 16). Iran supplied weapons, money, men and supplies to Hezbollah (Byers, p. 22).

Syria, which was still occupying Lebanon, of course, had little problem with the Iranian backed Hezbollah. This was especially true since Syria had cut off its relations with Iraq in 1980, when it invaded Iran because Syria felt that Iraq was doing work for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. That occurrence allowed for opened relations with Iran and Lebanon by the time of the 1982 Israel invasion of Lebanon (Palmer Harik, pp. 32-33). Since Syria had played a role in the happenings of Lebanon since the mid 1970s, this was an advantageous trilateral relationship, particularly since all three shared the desire to force Israel out of the region – the tie that bound them.

By the time the PLO was being weakened and run out of Lebanon, the complicated relationships aforementioned were already taking shape. To further complicate the situation in the last few months of 1982, the Israeli (and oddly Syrian) backed president-elect of Lebanon was assassinated on September 14<sup>th</sup>. It was assumed that the Palestinians committed the crime, causing a Christian militia to retaliate by raiding two Palestinian refugee camps, Sabra and Shatila that were located in west Beirut. Hundreds of civilians were massacred while the nearby Israeli troops did nothing to aid the refugees. A crisis of a leaderless government, combined with factions who were mortified and angry at the carnage, emerged. The Lebanese government requested the help of peace keeping troops, and France and the U.S. responded, after having just left the area after serving its mission to keep the peace between Israel and the PLO as the rest of the PLO were being evacuated (Byers, pp. 26-27).

For Hezbollah, the focus now shifted to the foreign occupiers – the French and U.S. troops. They were seen as supportive towards Israel, making them an enemy to the entire triumvirate, and as a threat to establishing Islamic rule, furthering the enmity of Hezbollah and more particularly, Iran (Byers, p. 27). And so the assaults on the foreign invaders began. On April 18, 1983, around one o'clock in the afternoon, a van drove into the U.S. Embassy building, setting off explosive charges that killed 63 people. Regardless of the fact that only 17 out of the 63 lives claimed were American, with the rest being Lebanese, the attack was still claimed a victory (Byers, p. 30). Suicide bombing then entered the scene as an effective strategy against occupying forces.

Presumably, the fact that the peace keeping troops remained in Lebanon left those same troops open to further attacks by Hezbollah. On October 23, 1983, U.S. Marines were sleeping in their barracks near Beirut airport. They slept soundly due to the multiple layers of security

surrounding them. However, just after six o'clock in the morning, a Lebanese soldier waved a pickup truck through an external checkpoint since these trucks were a common sight. Once through that checkpoint, the truck ran over barbed wire, around a bunker, smashed through a gate, around a barricade, and crashed into the lobby of the barracks, which detonated the truck full of TNT and compressed gas. The explosion brought down the entire building, killing 241 Marines and wounding another 80 (Byers, p. 31). To make matters worse for the foreign troops, just a few minutes later another attack occurred. About two miles to the north, another 600 pound "truck bomb" destroyed the 8 story building that was housing the Sixth French Parachute Infantry Regiment. There were 58 people killed in this second attack (Byers pp. 32-33).

To many, these events may appear as terrorist attacks. However, there are a few underlying aspects that show the attacks may have been provoked. First, it should not be forgotten that infighting between the various sects in Lebanon was still occurring, setting a confrontational stage within the state. Second, beginning in 1983, the U.S. had begun to retrain and reequip the Lebanese army, which mostly benefited the Christians. For obvious reasons, the Shi'ite Muslim population, comprising one-third of the Lebanese people, were not exactly thrilled with that idea. Further, the Cold War between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. was still going on behind the scenes, with both countries trying to defend themselves and exert their influence in the Middle East all at the same time. Since the U.S. was rearming the Lebanese Army, the U.S.S.R. began to replenish Syria's arsenal. With that backing, Syria became confident that it could run the U.S. out of Beirut, showing that this was a relatively common goal of the non-Christians playing a role in Lebanon (Harris, p. 180). The final underlying factor of these attacks was that Hezbollah was essentially at war with Israel, which created a chain of war with both the peace keeping troops and the Lebanese government. The U.S. support of Israel caused the

discord between Hezbollah and the U.S. troops. The Lebanese government's support of U.S. troops and Israel friendly policies, along with the persisting socio-political conditions that disfavored the Shi'a Muslims, made it appear as though the Lebanese government was a puppet of the U.S. Because of these factors, it can be seen how Hezbollah could plan to deal with the foreign invaders first, and then turn back to their fight in the region.

Therefore, under the working definition, there are some flaws in labeling these acts as "terrorism". (It should be noted that these three bombings are also the three main reasons the U.S. has officially labeled Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.) The first flaw is that these attacks do not appear to have been meant to affect a larger psychological audience other than those who were directly affected. The attacks were intended to run the foreign troops/influence out of Lebanon (Palmer Harik, p. 28). Secondly, it could be debated as to whether there was a lack of a state of war and that these attacks were purely offensive. For reasons mentioned above, the foreign troops could have been seen as a threat, adding to the internal strife of Lebanon. Although the attack on the U.S. Embassy is a little debatable, being largely noncombatant government personnel, the attacks on the Marine and French barracks have been misperceived as terrorism. Technically, those troops were combatants, invited into Lebanon to help stabilize the war-like scene in the country. When out and about, those troops were a fully armed threat to anyone who was against their presence. Common military tactics tell you that it is wise to attack the enemy when they do not expect it in order to have the maximum impact, and that is exactly what Hezbollah did.

To further exemplify the combat status of the U.S., the *USS New Jersey*, a battleship located off the coastline, mortared Beirut with over 300 projectiles in early 1984. Many businesses and homes of civilians were destroyed. There were two purposes of this

bombardment from the U.S. battleship. First, the vehemence of the mortaring was brought on in retaliation to the barracks bombings (Byers, p. 35). The second purpose, and possibly an excuse, was that they may have been attempting to relieve a Lebanese army unit that was surrounded by opposition militias in the mountains above the Beirut Airport (Palmer Harik, p. 37). There are mixed opinions as to what really drove the U.S. to conduct such a damaging attack. As a result, and to the delight of Hezbollah, the Lebanese government requested that the foreign troops leave. All U.S. Marines were out of Lebanon by February 26, 1984.

A little over a year had passed when Hezbollah conducted its fourth attack that has caused the organization to be labeled as terrorist. On June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1985, TWA flight 847 departed from Athens with the destination of Rome. It was not long before two men took control of the flight, utilizing guns and hand grenades (Byers, p. 39). The reports have revealed that the hijackers beat the crew and passengers, men, women and children alike. They also did not permit anyone to speak to each other in order to prevent conspiracies against them (Byers, p. 42). The plane was shuttled between Algeria and Beirut for two days, stopping for fuel, to release some hostages, and to take on other hijackers. The demand was that Israel release 766 Lebanese Shi'ites from Israeli jails, but Israel and the U.S. did not want to give in to terrorists for fear that it would legitimize those types of attacks as effective bargaining tools. As hostages were released by the hijackers, it was Americans and Jews who were forced to remain on board. Many of the Americans were military personnel, including Navy diver Robert Stethem. Stethem had been beaten and was eventually killed and rolled out onto the tarmac in Beirut. Thirty-nine hostages were held for three days on the plane, then divided up, taken off the plane, and hidden in Shi'ite neighborhoods for 17 more days. The hostages were not released until 31 Shi'ite prisoners were released from Israel (Byers, pp. 42-44).

It is difficult to debate that the TWA hijacking was not a terrorist attack, because it fits most of the qualifications. The psychological targets were both Israel and the U.S. as all other passengers were released over time. The influence of the hijacking did ultimately force Israel to take an action they would not have otherwise taken in the release of the 31 Shi'ite prisoners. Of course, even though several of the hostages were American military personnel, they were all definitely noncombatants. For these reasons, a debate stating that this was not a terrorist act would surely lose. However, it may be debated as to whether or not the hijacking was actually committed by Hezbollah. Hezbollah, as an organization, never officially staked a claim on the hijacking. Furthermore, it is now the appropriate time to recognize that in the beginnings of Hezbollah, from 1982 through 1985, there were several groups to which the name "Hezbollah" was tied. These groups were small, disorganized and were loosely associated, if at all. Each of these groups took their orders directly from Tehran and its Ayatollah. It is speculated that the ring leader of the hijacking, Mugniyeh, was a member of one of these wanna-be Hezbollah groups. To further the speculation, the real Hezbollah claims that they have never had an association with Mugniyeh (Palmer Harik, pp. 171-173). To add to this possibility, the official Hezbollah has never committed another act similar to the hijacking. This fact assists in proving that it really may not have been Hezbollah because logic says that they would commit similar acts, since the first was a success. It should also not be ruled out that the small number of hijackers could have been acting on their own accord, as terrorists have free will like all other people.

Regardless, by the end of 1985, a solid organizational structure was forming within Hezbollah that had clear goals, a strategy and financial resources (Byers, p. 22). For a while, they continued in the pursuit of Iran's interests that coincided with theirs. A series of kidnapping

sprees occurred, about 30 in four years. All those captured were foreign invaders that Iran could use to bargain for their interests, such as for the repayment of a French debt of \$330 million and for an arms deal with the U.S. to assist in Iran's fight with Iraq (Byers, p. 39). There were dual motives in these acts for Hezbollah. The first was to keep Iran pleased so that they would continue to supply and fund the organization. The second motive was that the acts furthered Hezbollah interests in helping to run out the remaining foreign occupying forces from Lebanon.

As Hezbollah had successes in achieving their immediate goals, their focal points shifted toward the socio-political situations in Lebanon. As previously mentioned, the living situation for the Shi'a Muslims in southern Lebanon had never been optimal, but the country had been further ravaged by war, both internal and external, since 1975. By the late 1980s, Hezbollah had determined that the best way for it to advance toward its objectives was to become politically involved within the Lebanese government.

The organization had already been delivering services to areas in southern Lebanon and to other locations where refugee camps were located, so restructuring in 1989 in order to reach its political goals was not too far of a stretch (Byers, p. 54). The social services being provided by Hezbollah covered many areas, such as health care, financial services, agricultural programs, educational programs including tuition and books, and even disability programs for resistance fighters and those wounded in conflicts (Byers, p. 23, 25, Emdad & Al Jarha). The services were often free or of little cost, and open to all religions. Frankly, Hezbollah was delivering where the government failed to, especially in southern Lebanon (Aerbel Email). This aided the organization's legitimacy amongst the war torn Shi'ite populations.

Hezbollah did not, however, relinquish its role in fighting the occupation of Israel. That fact may have actually aided its gaining political legitimacy because the vast majority of the



attacks on Israel were provoked, not to mention most people do not appreciate their land being occupied by foreigners (Palmer Harik, p. 115). There were so many tit for tat skirmishes that it was virtually impossible to keep track, some being worse than others. What Israel may not have realized was that every time they attacked and killed Lebanese civilians, legitimacy was added to Hezbollah's campaign and the resistance movement.

Hezbollah, in order to secure seats in parliament, even went as far as urging for Christian involvement in the resistance against Israel and ran on the same electoral tickets (Palmer Harik, p. 73). Also, to ease tensions and prove that the organization had reformed itself, they began to release all lingering western prisoners as a sign of good faith in 1989 (Palmer Harik, pp. 58-59). Apparently, their campaign strategies worked, with Hezbollah winning 12 parliamentary seats in 1992 (Palmer Harik, p. 95).

For fairly obvious reasons, the Maronite government was not thrilled with the idea of Hezbollah officially joining the parliament, so Syria stepped in once again. The deal brokered was a sort of trade. Hezbollah would have to forgo any subversive activities that would undermine the government. However, in return they would be fully and officially authorized to carry on their resistance against Israeli occupation, in order to regain the territory for the state (Palmer Harik, p. 47).

This agreement was a rather huge breakthrough in Hezbollah's gaining legitimacy. Essentially, they took on the role of the Lebanese Army when the government endorsed their attempts to force Israel off Lebanese land. Through the 1990s, it became general consensus among the Lebanese that Hezbollah was rather effective in resisting the Israeli invasion and that they should be allowed to continue (Palmer Harik, p. 48). Israel, again, added to Hezbollah's

legitimacy through its violation of several international conventions in its treatment of Lebanese civilians in the occupied zone (Palmer Harik, p. 49).

Hezbollah continued to gain support and legitimacy, especially amongst the Shi'ite populations, and has continued to win elections, both parliamentary and municipal. Again, their success at the polls was due to the services they provided to the people of Lebanon, their successes in the resistance of Israel, and mistakes Israel made while they claimed they were attempting to protect their border.

One of the noteworthy "mistakes" made by Israel was entitled "Grapes of Wrath". Then acting Israeli Prime Minister Peres approved an order to launch attacks against Hezbollah bases in Southern Lebanon. He was hoping it would assist his appearance in his upcoming elections for president of Israel. The attack by Israel occurred on April 18, 1996, taking out a UN compound in Qana, Lebanon. The death toll was 109 women, children and elderly that had sought refuge in the compound. Needless to say, Israel hunted for excuses which all failed, leaving egg on their face (Iskandar, p. 79).

As a result, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April, the April Accord was announced. The Accord was a four part agreement that included the following stipulations: Lebanese rocket attacks on Israel would cease, Israel would not fire weapons on any more Lebanese civilians, both sides were to protect their civilians and not launch attacks on or from populated areas, and finally, without the violation of the other three stipulations, both sides would retain the right to defend themselves (Iskandar, p. 81). Oddly, this Accord even further legitimized Hezbollah, as Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri secured recognition of Hezbollah's role in the country and in international politics due to its capacity to abide by international agreements (Iskandar, p. 81).

Undoubtedly, the fighting between Hezbollah and Israel did not end after the accord. Hezbollah actually did what it could under the Accord to terrorize Israeli troops, and vice versa. To make matters worse for the Israelis, Hezbollah provided an opportunity for the SLA that were helping Israel to leave the conflict. Expecting persecution by virtually all Lebanese, the SLA feared returning to their homes, and they had no idea if Israel would assist them in any way. When Hezbollah offered leniency if they left the battle scene in June of 1999, much of the SLA opted for its disorderly retreat (Palmer Harik, p. 126). So as Hezbollah stepped up its attacks at the same time, it understandably led Israel to realize that occupying that sliver of Lebanese land and the corresponding loss of the lives of Israeli soldiers was not worth it. On April 16<sup>th</sup> of 2000, Israel notified the UN that it would finally pull out of Lebanon, and so they did in May to avoid further loss of life (Iskandar, p. 104).

However, Israel did not opt to pull out of the Shebaa Farms region, which is also seen by Hezbollah and Syria as belonging to Lebanon. This left the conflict open for Hezbollah to continue the resistance movement (Palmer Harik, p. 154-155). So, of course, skirmishes over the land and between Hezbollah and Israel have occurred over recent years, to include a 33 day war in the summer of 2006 in which they violated each others' boundaries. But chances are that it is better for Hezbollah's existence for Israel to continue to occupy some piece of Lebanon in order for them to maintain their legitimacy in pursuit of their main goal of destroying Israel.

Considering that Lebanon is in a troubled region and is a somewhat troubled country, all political, economic, and social issues have not presently resolved themselves. The country needs to rebuild its war torn economy and find a way for each sect to coexist with fair representation in government. The work of Hezbollah in gathering support and political mobilization for the plight of the Shi'a people in Lebanon should not be ignored and declared illegitimate by labeling

the party a terrorist organization. However, there are a couple of actions from the 1990's not yet covered that occurred outside of Lebanon that may render their legitimacy questionable.

The attacks were only mentioned in two sources out of the many utilized for the purposes of this paper, so it makes credibility slightly questionable. The first of these attacks on foreign soil was the bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on March 17<sup>th</sup> of 1992, that killed 29 people. The other was the bombing of a Jewish community center, also located in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This attack on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1994, killed 86 (Byers, p. 48). Considering the targets, it is possible that Hezbollah could have conducted these operations. Yet logically, based upon their goals within their home country of Lebanon, it is unlikely. By the 1990s, Hezbollah had clearly realized that the best way to attain their goals was by utilizing the legitimate means of the Lebanese political system. Considering the 1992 bombing just mentioned was right before the first elections that Hezbollah participated in, it is highly unlikely that they would have been willing to jeopardize all they had done to show they had changed in the eyes of the world. It is more logical to assume that some splinter cell or individual with no direct ties to Hezbollah actually committed those crimes.

Regardless of the few questionable and hardly provable incidents, Hezbollah and its actions do not fit very well into the definition of terrorism. They see themselves as a freedom fighting organization that would like political pressure placed on the Lebanese government in the areas of education, medical and social benefits. Hezbollah does not wish to create any discord amongst the Lebanese population in pursuing its main goal of ridding the "Zionist enemy" from the "Islamic and Arab contemporary nation" (Hizbullah Press Office – 3/20/98). For those reasons, they have proved to gain quite a large amount of legitimate political support. In some

cases, they have used terror tactics to fight Israel and other foreign invaders, but as explained above, those events do not really qualify the organization as terrorist.

If a label is required for Hezbollah, a more appropriate one, at least for its military wing, may be that of “guerilla group”. They have operated as a military force against foreign occupiers, are highly organized and disciplined, and they even wear snazzy uniforms (Palmer Harik, p. 169). (Terrorists usually wear civilian clothing in order to blend into the crowd.) Even the Lebanese government legitimized the Hezbollah military wing as a national resistance force, furthering the derailment of claims that it is a terrorist organization.

There is no doubt that Hezbollah will continue its struggle against Israel, and each will continue to retaliate against the other, but Hezbollah has realized that its goals may be more attainable through legitimate means that could better the lives and situations of its religious sect. A new friend in Lebanon through email could not have phrased it any better in saying, “Personally, I am not at all a fan of the Hizbullah ideology... but I must say that they have shown integrity, have not called for any sectarian strife or war and have always been very reasonable in their political demands” (Aerbel email).

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