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Hezbollah's Nasrallah: the "great man" of the Levant

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Hezbollah's Nasrallah: the "great man" of the Levant

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

Since its founding in the early 1980s, Hezbollah has become a major political player in Middle East politics. Attempts at explaining the organization's behavior, however, has been largely limited to one theory—that the group's actions are driven by long-time allies and benefactors Iran and Syria. This thesis challenges this “proxy” view of Hezbollah and explores, under the “great men” theory, the influence of the organization's Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, a charismatic leader with celebrity status across the entire Arab world. This study finds that, while Iran and Syria were defining forces in Hezbollah's early ideologies and actions, the organization now operates with a high level of independence, allowing Nasrallah to carry out his own vision for the Party of God. Therefore, to understand the organization today and to predict how it will act in the future, focus cannot remain solely on Iran and Syria but must be expanded to include the preferences and strategies of Secretary-General Nasrallah.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2006, the entire world was fixated on Southern Lebanon as tensions between Israel and the Lebanese Shi'a organization Hezbollah¹ escalated into war. The thirty-four days of conflict between this state actor and this non-state actor left many new questions about Hezbollah and reminded us of the complexities surrounding this unique movement. At the forefront of the mystery of Hezbollah is the question: what drives its behavior? Governments and media outlets have long answered this question by pinning the actions of the organization on Iran and Syria, largely ignoring other explanations. They casually and repeatedly credit Tehran and Damascus with ordering the actions of Hezbollah and providing the financial support for those actions to be taken. In doing so, they essentially reduce the complexities of Hezbollah to a single proxy theory, which says that the organization is little more than an extension of the states of Iran and Syria. While scholars, particularly recently, have questioned this approach, they have not provided real alternatives.

Among the neglected explanations for Hezbollah's behavior is the role that the Secretary-General of the organization, Hassan Nasrallah, plays in influencing and executing Hezbollah's policies. As a popular figure in the Arab world, a cult of personality has developed around Nasrallah that makes him a particularly important individual for inquiry. This study examines the influence of this individual leader on Hezbollah's behavior and thereby offers an alternative explanation to the proxy theory espoused by the mainstream media and many governments and scholars. It tests hypotheses on Nasrallah's personal

¹ A number of transliterations for Hezbollah are found in the scholarly literature, in official documents, in news reports, and in other sources. Unless contained in a direct quote from the work of others, this thesis will only use the transliteration "Hezbollah" for the purpose of uniformity.

connections to Hezbollah's actions and does so alongside the dominant existing theory on Hezbollah's behavior.

Understanding Hezbollah contributes to our understanding of non-state actors generally, particularly those that rise to the level of Hezbollah in terms of independence, power, and influence in global politics. We need look no further than Iraq to find groups that may be forming in the likes of Hezbollah. If the United States seeks to exercise some degree of control over these entities, many of which the United States alleges are supported by Iran and Syria, it must understand what drives such organizations to act. Its officials must understand the ability of outside forces to use proxies as foreign policy arms, and at the same time, understand the ability of the proxies to outgrow their puppeteers. Given the similar atmospheres of chaos and conflict of pre-Hezbollah Lebanon and post-invasion Iraq, the study of individual leaders and their abilities to wield power and influence within non-state entities that operate in anarchical settings should be of particular importance to scholars and international relations practitioners.

At the same time, this study helps to build upon the individual-level theories of international relations by expanding their application to new settings and by testing their ability to explain the behavior of actors like Hezbollah. While some non-state entities operate under incoherent leadership structures, others produce identifiable individual leaders comparable to the "great men" who have shaped history. Again, we can look to Iraq and already see individual leaders emerging—Muqtada al-Sadr most prominently—that command significant attention and wield significant power, and that could potentially turn into the Hassan Nasrallahs of Iraq. With a better understanding of the roles that individual leaders can play in driving the behavior of both state and non-state actors, international

relations practitioners and scholars can better interpret and predict the behavior of these entities.

This thesis will first lay out the popular explanations of Hezbollah as espoused by the mainstream international media and by many governments around the globe. My theory on the group's behavior will follow, as I outline scholarly shifts in explaining the group's behavior and explain my application of individual-level theories of international relations to Hezbollah and Nasrallah. I will propose three individual-level hypotheses and one alternative hypothesis that follow popular conceptions of Iranian and Syrian puppetry. I will begin my analysis with brief biographical sketches of Hezbollah and Secretary-General Nasrallah and then test each of the four hypothesis in the context of four historical events: (1) the official announcement of Hezbollah in 1985; (2) the end of the Lebanese civil war with the Ta'if Agreement in 1989; (3) the Lebanese General Elections of 1992; and (4) the summer war between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006. I will conclude by summarizing the findings of my study and offering implications for those results, in the process suggesting future venues for research on Hezbollah, Nasrallah, and individual-level theories.

II. EXPLAINING HEZBOLLAH

In early May 2008, violence erupted on the streets of Beirut between Hezbollah and the Lebanese government (Lee 2008). In the course of fighting, Hezbollah was able to secure significant areas of the city, enabled by the weakness of the Lebanese government—the parliament was being held together by a fragile coalition, and the nation had been without a president for nearly six months. The United States quickly offered its assessment of the conflict. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice explained: “Backed by Syria and Iran, Hezbollah and its allies are killing and injuring innocent citizens and undermining the legitimate authority of the Lebanese state.” Sean McCormack, a spokesperson for the State Department, declared that the US government had evidence connecting Iran and Syria to the conflict in Beirut, adding, “It is becoming more apparent now that the linkages that we know exist and are ongoing between Hezbollah and Syria and Iran are starting to manifest themselves in the current crisis.” The White House concurred with State’s assessment, asserting that “Hezbollah’s relationship with Iran and Syria . . . demonstrates the threat it poses to international peace and security.” McCormack specifically referred to Hezbollah and its collaborators as “proxies” of these nations.

This recent example illustrates a pattern in the United States’ assessment of Hezbollah, one which carries into the US and international media. The United States government, through officials at all levels and in both the executive and legislative branches, has demonstrated an inability to separate the actions of Hezbollah from Iran and Syria. U.S. leaders consistently describe Hezbollah as a venue for Iran and Syria to carry out their foreign policies for the region and support this claim primarily with claims that the Shi’a group would be unable to operate but for the financial and technical support of these two

states. This section provides an overview of this popular explanation for Hezbollah's behavior with illustrations from executive and congressional officials. It follows with a discussion of the media's adoption of the proxy theory, which has helped to spread this conception of Hezbollah into the public mind.

In each of George W. Bush's final two State of the Union addresses—in 2007 and 2008—the President referred to Hezbollah and, in both instances, discussed the organization in the context of Iran and/or Syria (Bush 2007; Bush 2008). Bush's State Department has also subscribed to the proxy theory. In its most recent reports on global terrorism, the Department sharply condemns Iran for using groups throughout the Middle East, including Hezbollah, to carry out its policies for the region (U.S. Dept. of State, "Country Reports Chapter 3" 2008). The same report also cites Syria and its cooperating with Iran to "provide political and material support to Hizballah," and it reports that "[t]he regime in Damascus continue[s] to undermine Lebanon's sovereignty and security through its proxies" like Hezbollah. The chapter of the report discussing Foreign Terrorist Organizations cites the specific supply chains to Hezbollah from the two states and also notes that, while recognizing it can act independently, Hezbollah "often acts at [Iran's] behest" (U.S. Dept. of State, "Country Reports Chapter 6" 2008). Most recently, during the street fighting in Beirut, as discussed above, the State Department publicly labeled Hezbollah a "proxy" of Syria and Iran (Lee 2008). A senior State official anonymously reported to the Associated Press that the Department believed that several of those involved in the street clashes were "fully owned subsidiaries of Syria" and that Hezbollah would not have started fighting without approval from Tehran. Certainly executive branch foreign policy officials are convinced by the proxy explanation for the organization.

Additionally, it appears that the proxy theory will be espoused by the next U.S. president. Two United States Senators, one of whom will assume the presidency on January 20, 2009, John McCain and Barack Obama, have both demonstrated a consistent pattern in discussing the “threat” of Hezbollah only alongside the “threats” of either Iran or Syria or both. Senator McCain, for example, in addressing the International Relations Forum in Des Moines, Iowa, in October 2007, stated that “check[ing] Hezbollah terror” would not occur unless the United States could convince Syria to change its policies for the region (McCain 2007). Like President Bush, McCain does not refer to Hezbollah unless he frames his reference within discussion of Iran and/or Syria (see, e.g., “His Own Words” 2007).

Senator Barack Obama offers references to Hezbollah in ways similar to those of George W. Bush and John McCain. For instance, his response to the fighting between Hezbollah and the Lebanese government in May 2008 included condemnations of Iran and Syria (Obama 2008). Similarly, on his online factsheet outlining his “strong record of supporting the security, peace, and prosperity of Israel,” Senator Obama, in his section on Hezbollah, twice cites the support of Iran and Syria in Hezbollah’s operations and announces his policy to end this support (Obama for America 2008). These words by Senators McCain and Obama are evidence that the pinning of Hezbollah to Iran and Syria—and the refusal to discuss Hezbollah without references to these two states—has become a consensus among U.S. lawmakers of both major political parties, which means an alternative theory will be hard-pressed to make its way into political discourse in the near future.

With agreement between both the executive and legislative branches of the United States government, it is no wonder that the proxy theory has become unquestioned truth in the press. Hezbollah is rarely discussed in the Western media without reference to its various

avenues of support from Iran and Syria, and often even stronger ties are cited or implied. Sometimes a story will cite government officials in reporting their connections; other times, however, a story will cite their connections in the course of providing supposedly factual background information about events in Lebanon.

One final source of the proxy theory is the Israeli government, which is able to use the pro-Israel lobby in the United States to perpetuate the view among U.S. lawmakers. According to Professors Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) in their study of the influence of the Israel lobby on United States foreign policy, “the lobby has pushed American leaders to disarm Hezbollah and help create a Lebanon that is friendly to Israel. But these goals cannot be accomplished without radically changing the behavior of Iran and Syria, since those states support and arm Hezbollah, and Syria has a long history of involvement in Lebanese politics. Given these and other links among Israel’s adversaries, the lobby tends to see all of them as part of a seamless web of evil that the United States must at least keep at bay if not destroy” (200). If the claims about the power of the pro-Israel lobby by Mearsheimer and Walt are true, then the lobby’s tying of Hezbollah into a “web of evil” with Syria and Iran surely permeates the proxy theory into circles of lawmakers and other elites, including those of the media, and further perpetuates the theory into political discourse.

Whether the President, lawmakers, media figures, or pro-Israel interest groups truly believe the tenets of the proxy theory is its own question. Nonetheless, the effect of their public expressions that Hezbollah is a mere pawn of Syria and Iran is that a popular conception has evolved with this idea at its core. Hezbollah is, thus, not typically viewed as an independent actor capable of making its own decisions and forging its own future.

III. A DIFFERENT APPROACH

A. Challenging the Proxy Theory

Scholars have begun to question this popular conception of Hezbollah as a puppet of Iran and Syria, particularly in light of recent events. While comments from scholars about the Iran-Hezbollah and Syria-Hezbollah relationships vary, Bryan Early (2006) nicely summarizes what many scholars have stated or assumed in their recent work: “Although Iran and Syria were instrumental in the organization’s founding, training, and support, [Hezbollah] has grown into a uniquely practical and independent Islamist organization with its roots tied deeper to the Lebanese Shiites’ plight than the politicking of foreign government or religious establishments” (44). Emile El-Hokayem (2007), in specifically evaluating Syria’s grip on the organization today, declares that “[l]ong gone are the days when Damascus’s rules and influence determined Hizballah’s activities” (35). The result, he argues, is that Syria can no longer guarantee that it can constrain the group in efforts to prevent war because “Hizballah has emerged as a more independent player able to operate in Lebanon and the wider Middle East on its own terms.” El-Hokayem concludes that, while some of Hezbollah’s interests intersect those of Syria and Iran, observers tend to “overestimate” the control that the two states exert over the organization today. Reza Aslan (2006) has attacked the proxy theory—and those who espouse it—more directly, asserting that “it would be a grave exaggeration to claim, as the White House repeatedly has, that Hezbollah is merely a puppet of Syria and Iran” (31). Aslan claims that the organization’s behavior is now driven by the Lebanese people, not other nations, as Hezbollah has “acquired [a] popular mandate in Lebanon through a political platform focused solely on nationalist politics.”

Despite such academic rejections of the proxy label, however, few have thoroughly developed the argument or demonstrated viable alternatives. This study, therefore, follows their work. If these observers correctly dismiss the notion that Hezbollah's actions are driven by external forces, specifically those of Syria and Iran, then there must be something internal to the organization that explains its behavior. From this starting point, there are a number of directions that this analysis could take in testing internal determinants of Hezbollah's behavior, all of which may have merit. For instance, one might examine institutional or bureaucratic structures that shape the organization's actions, or one could consider internal interests that use public opinion and political capital to influence Hezbollah's policies. This study, however, explores individual-level international relations theories in the context of Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah to explain the actions of Hezbollah. Nasrallah's prestige in Lebanon and across the greater Arab world, coupled with his commanding personality and ability to influence regional politics, makes him a compelling candidate for exploring "Great Men" theories, as demonstrated below.

B. Individuals in International Relations

The Great Men Theory was perhaps summarized best by Thomas Carlyle, a 19th century Scottish philosopher and historian: "No great man lives in vain. The History of the world is but the Biography of great men" (2003, 39). Indeed, when contemplating the past, it is difficult to separate leaders such as Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and Louis IX from the events with which they were involved. After all, "[h]ow can we explain twentieth-century history without reference to Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Vladimir Lenin, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi, or Mao Zedong?" (Byman & Pollack 2001, 108). Although one can find evidence of political and philosophical minds from the

beginning of Western civilization contemplating the role of individual personalities in international relations, recent work by Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack provides a contemporary model for analyzing the role of “great men” in foreign policy formulation and execution.

In their 2001 article, “Let Us Now Praise Great Men,” Byman and Pollack argue that political scientists today largely ignore the role that the personalities of individual leaders play in international relations.² They bemoan this pervasive trend, insisting that “[i]t is time to rescue men and women, as individuals, from the oblivion to which political scientists have constricted them” (109). Byman and Pollack argue that, if academics will give heed to their argument, they will discover “that the goals, abilities, and foibles of individuals are crucial to the intentions, capabilities, and strategies of a state.” To support their insistence that individuals are key to understanding the foreign policies of states, they recount the stories of Adolf Hitler (115–21), Napoleon Bonaparte (125–28), Saddam Hussein (128–32), and other leaders whose personalities and temperaments, they argue, directly spurred the foreign policies that their states pursued. They cite the personal ambitions of such figures forced upon their states, the willingness—or unwillingness—of leaders to form alliances through personal relationships with other leaders, and even the ability of “great men” to alter the material capabilities of the states they lead.

² The authors note that the glaring exception to this rule is Kenneth Waltz’s *Man, the State, and War*. In this classical work in international relations theory, Waltz examines his “first image” of international relations in which state behavior stems from individual behavior (Waltz 2001). In the end, Waltz rejects the “first image” approach for his “third image” systemic approach, though Byman and Pollack respond by rejecting his rejection (see Byman & Pollack 2001, 111–14).

While Byman and Pollack explicitly do not use these historical accounts to test individual-level theories of international politics (115), they do use them to develop thirteen testable hypotheses about the role of individuals in international relations in four categories (133–45). In their first category, they assert the “big picture” premise that “individuals can shape the broadest contours of international relations”—that is, that individual personalities matter in the formulation and execution of foreign policy (133). Second, Byman and Pollack put forth hypotheses that center upon the role of the personality traits of individual leaders on the foreign policies their states pursue (136). Third, they present hypotheses that address the relevance of specific contexts in analyzing how individuals affect foreign policy (140). Finally, they offer a series of hypotheses that focuses on the interaction between individual leaders and the “second image” and “third image” of international relations (144).

In concluding their “Great Men” article, Byman and Pollack remind readers that “[g]iants still walk the earth.” Accordingly, they hope that their work will trigger a revival of “first image” theorists (145). While they do not claim that individual-level analysis can answer every question in international relations, they insist that it be included in the scholarly quest to discover truths about political behavior (146). Without such analysis, the work of political scientists will always be incomplete. While many of Byman and Pollack’s specific hypotheses are not suitable for this thesis, this analysis uses three hypotheses about individual leaders that are derived from their work in attempting to explain the behavior of Hezbollah through its Secretary-General.

By exploring individual-level theories, I am stepping outside of the norm for international relations studies and, in the line of Byman and Pollack, attempting to “rescue” individuals from the place of irrelevance to which they were cast by the political science

community. Much of the dominant international relations theory in recent decades, though increasingly diversifying, has focused on systemic structure to retroactively explain state behavior. Those who view global politics from the system level, however, are unconcerned about the internal dynamics of states and thereby dismiss the level of politics where much of history is made. At the same time, while they may be able to provide plausible explanations of past state behavior based on their assumptions about the system, their work does little for predicting how states will act in the future. This may not bother some of them—Waltz, for example, repeatedly emphasizes that his is not a theory meant to predict foreign policy—but their work alone leaves practitioners of international relations with very little to reference in formulating and executing foreign policies.

This study, by exploring the driving forces behind Hezbollah's behavior, seeks to understand the past with the hope of also understanding the future. By exploring how the leadership of Hezbollah confronts the challenges presented by national and regional politics, we will have more immediate predictive power than the more traditional approaches to international relations typically provide. In explaining state behavior surrounding a major event, for instance, scholars often wait until they perceive balance to have been restored, and then they cast all of the states' actions during the time period as attempts to restore balance in the system. Whether they are right or wrong in their final analyses, they tend to ignore politics as they happen and must remain relatively quiet until well after events have transpired. Certainly an individual-level approach like the one used here will not allow us to make perfect predictions for the future. However, in identifying that an individual leader is the driving force behind an actor's activities, even if that individual is merely responding to anarchy or the security dilemma, we have a much clearer focal point for looking forward.

We need not operate solely under the general assumptions of how states behave, but we can instead adapt those assumptions to the context of the specific leader and political unit under study. In doing so, our predictions will be better informed by the circumstances and, hopefully then, more accurate than if we had relied solely on the traditional approaches to analyzing state behavior under international relations theory.

C. Applying State Theories to Non-State Actors

There is certainly a leap that is taken in applying individual-level international relations theories, which are derived from the state experience and intended to explain state behavior, to non-state actors like Hezbollah. The adaptation of state theories to non-state actors, however, is not without precedent. For instance, in his 1993 article “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” Barry Posen applies realist international relations theory to non-state actors in his analysis of conflict within anarchical contexts. He examines relations between groups in isolated “emerging anarchies” that, he insists, result from “the collapse of imperial regimes.” That is, when great powers fall, a miniature anarchic world remains in which non-state actors—be they religious, ethnic, cultural, or otherwise in nature—must struggle against one another to maintain security and survival vis-à-vis the others. Because there is effectively no sovereign above these groups, the collapse of an empire leaves a situation much like that of the larger world. Accordingly, Posen conducts a classic security dilemma analysis of ethnic groups in these sorts of settings, specifically in the aftermath of the fall of Yugoslavia and the fall of the Soviet Union. He considers geography, technology, alliances, capabilities of all sorts, and other factors that are traditionally applied to states in explaining war. His sound analysis demonstrates that there are situations in which state-based theories can be applied to non-state actors.

In a similar fashion, James Fearon and David Laitin (1996) apply principles typically reserved for states in explaining cooperation among ethnic groups. In support of their argument that ethnic conflict is far less prevalent than popular conceptions would suggest, they apply social matching games to illustrate two scenarios for how cooperation is achieved between such groups. In the first—their “spiral equilibrium” theory—they argue that individuals cooperate with members of other groups to prevent potential individual conflicts from spiraling to the group level. In their second scenario, they present their “in-group policing equilibrium” theory, which says that individuals cooperate with those outside of their own group because they will be punished by their fellow group members if they do not. As in Posen’s study, Fearon and Laitin’s analysis and conclusions rely on the presence and conditions of anarchy. In those situations where states are ineffective, identity groups become the primary actors and therefore face the challenges of conflict and cooperation that states face in the anarchy of the international system. In that sense, Fearon and Laitin analyze non-state actors with the same assumptions and principles that scholars use when understanding conflict and cooperation among states.

Other scholars have recognized the importance of non-state actors to international politics and lamented their exclusion from serious scholarly consideration. Charles King (2001), for example, argues that territorial separatist groups have emerged as “the state builders of the early 2000s,” as many have evolved into “de facto countries whose ability to field armed forces, control their own territory, educate their children, and maintain local economies is about as well developed as that of the recognized states of which they are still notionally a part.” He identifies “de facto states” in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova and looks to specific characteristics of the separatist groups that make them state-like, including

their advanced economic and social systems and their interactions with states and international organizations. By disregarding the dynamics of “de facto states” as mere internal security complications, King argues, scholars are missing opportunities to understand “the deep political and economic incentives” that sustain intrastate conflicts. They should, therefore, look at these groups in the same eyes as they do states, as sufficient state-like mechanisms are present to justify consideration of state principles.

From a different angle, Douglas Lemke (2003) also encourages the applicability of state principles to non-state actors and takes the argument even further by insisting that some non-state actors be afforded state status in international relations studies. In his article “African Lessons for International Relations Research,” Lemke elaborates on the argument that there is a “great power bias” in international relations theory that makes it largely inapplicable to the developing world, particularly Africa. Among his arguments is that “[b]y ignoring nonstate actors that nevertheless control territory, possess militias, and otherwise behave like states, international relations research tends to look at the wrong, or at least at an incomplete, set of actors when considering places like Africa.” Therefore, when “nonstate actors behave in ways [international relations] theories suggest *international actors* should behave,” their exclusion from scholarly analysis results in distorted or altogether inaccurate conclusions. Lemke insists, therefore, that to combat the bias present in today’s body of international relations theory, researchers need to “devote considerable attention to the nonstate actors so prominent in Africa (and elsewhere in the developing world).” By including these critical actors in the research process, scholars will be better equipped to make valid conclusions.

By no means do these scholars suggest that state-based international relations principles may be appropriately applied to any non-state actor—certainly they cannot, as many scholars have cautioned when presenting their theories. There are a number of conditions, however, under which non-state actors become sufficiently like states to warrant state-like treatment under the body of international relations theory, whether at the individual, unit, or systemic level. Permeating all five conditions set forth below is the presence of—and reaction to—anarchy. That is, when treating a non-state actor as a state, the group must be operating in some form of anarchical setting. If a group is ultimately subject to a sovereign state, it does not face the realities that states face in terms of security concerns and consequences of their actions. It does not truly face the challenges and opportunities of a state, nor does it require many of the state-like attributes set forth below if there is a legitimate and effective state onto which the group members and leaders can fall back as a safety net.

The first condition is that the actor must be capable of executing force in potential conflicts with states and other non-state groups. If a group has effective military capabilities, it is part of international security calculations and therefore presents the same security concerns to states that actual states present. The interaction with anarchy in this element is that the organization is armed so that it can address actual or perceived threats to its security, either because the state in which it acts is unable to do so, or because it is unwilling to do so.

Second, the group must have an internal power structure with designated distributions of responsibilities and some level of institutions to carry out the group's objectives. Like the internal structures of states, the institutions of non-state actors need not be highly developed or highly effective in governing and administering the group's affairs. Rather, their mere

presence increases a group's likeness to a state and allows for the application of the various state-level international relations theories, which comprise a significant portion of the collection of theories that have developed to explain state behavior within anarchy.

Third, to treat a non-state actor as a state for analytical purposes, the organization must provide some level of social services to the population. This characteristic furthers a group's legitimacy as a state-like entity, as the offering of public goods and the meeting of public needs demonstrate basic roles of a state. Requiring that a group offers social services ensures that a non-state actor is more than a militia, which would not face the complexities of foreign relations and security that a state would face. This is due, in large part, to the fact that social offerings denote a tie to one of the traditional requirements of a state—a population. Without a public, leaders of a non-state entity would not need to contemplate the same consequences of its actions that the leaders of a state would be forced to consider. When a group is a source of social support for a population, it forces leaders to consider the effects of its actions on its social networks and services and the effects on the population's general welfare, which means the stakes of its policies approach the level of those of states. Most likely, the services are offered due to the failure of the official state in which the population resides, and this lack of a sovereign body to oversee social affairs demonstrates a degree of anarchy.

Similarly, the fourth condition is that there is a tie between the non-state entity and land. Territory, again, is a classic element of a state, and the tie to a specific geographical setting ensures that a non-state actor is in fact more state-like in its actions and in the processes and conditions that drive those actions. There is a stake in the integrity of the land, both for the strategic military purposes and for the population in the area that the

organization serves and protects. If a group lacks a tie to a specific area of land, it is not concerned about a specific geographical setting, which is a concern that states cannot ignore. Their actions, therefore, would be different than those of states, making international relations theory inapplicable to such groups. When anarchy, or at least some level of anarchy, prevails in a geographical area, a non-state entity may step in to fill security and social gaps, and in the course of addressing the anarchy that prevailed, a defined geographic scope may evolve.

Finally, to appropriately apply state-based theories to non-state actors, those actors must be capable of carrying out their own independent foreign policies. It is because of anarchy that they are able to do this. If a group is more powerful than the official state in which it operates, it should be able to form and execute its own foreign policy. Its leaders can meet with representatives of states, and it can act as a state would act in its relationship with states; it can, for example, form alliances, send and receive assistance of all sorts and at all levels, share intelligence and technology, and use force against states and other non-state entities. When an organization is able to act without requiring permission or facing retribution from a supposedly sovereign state, it is acting more like a state than a non-state entity. Accordingly, when non-state actors enjoy the capacity to formulate and execute their own foreign policies without interference or consequence, they are effectively behaving as states in the international area. For this reason, such groups can be examined under state-based international relations theory.

When these conditions are present, we can use or adapt the theories applied to states to better understand the behaviors of non-state actors and their roles in global politics, as Posen did with ethnic groups and the security dilemma. My analysis here, however, takes

Posen's approach one step further. While Posen applied the principles of the security dilemma to ethnic groups in emerging anarchies, his discussion was restricted to the security dilemma that ethnic groups face vis-à-vis other ethnic groups. That is, Posen considered "like" units in the strictest sense. He did not, for instance, examine the security dilemma that ethnic groups face in relation to surrounding states—the seemingly "unlike" units were not included in his anarchical setting. Posen applied the principles of a state-based theory to miniature, isolated anarchies without expanding his analysis to mixed scenarios in which he would have to treat states and ethnic groups on similar terms within the same context.

In my analysis, however, I follow Lemke's call and assume that seemingly "unlike" units may in fact be "like" units when the aforementioned conditions are present. In doing so, I treat Hezbollah as a state, or at least a pseudo-state, in order to apply international relations theory—specifically the Great Men Theory—to explain what drives its behavior. I justify my application of a theory designed for states to a non-state actor by the organization's similarity to a state, as evidenced by the presence of the conditions enumerated above and discussed below. I afford Hezbollah the same status as I afford Iran, Syria, or any other state in applying a theory meant to explain how states behave in its relations with other states. While I am unable to dismiss Hezbollah's official non-state status completely in my analysis, as far too much context would be lost without recognizing its relationship with Lebanon and the Lebanese people, I do not hesitate to recognize it as a political unit appropriate for the Great Men Theory. Nor do I hesitate to apply the Great Men Theory to Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah. The following sections provide explanations for the treatment of Hezbollah as a state and the treatment of its leader as a "great man."

D. Hezbollah as a Pseudo-State

Hezbollah meets the conditions outlined previously for applying state-based theory to the organization. First, Hezbollah is capable of engaging in armed force—in fact, *quite* capable, as demonstrated by its war against the state of Israel in 2006. Hezbollah began essentially as a militia in the early 1980s to resist Israel and its supporters who were occupying areas of southern Lebanon, so the ability to use force effectively has always been at the foundation of the group's identity and objectives (Jaber 1997, 27). Since its founding, the organization's capacity to use force has developed substantially to the point that the group's military wing behaves much like a state military. For example, it considers all males associated with its social and political programs potential soldiers to be drafted, just as a state does (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 117), and it utilizes a sophisticated military intelligence network, which it developed long ago (Wege 1994, 156). In the areas in which Hezbollah operates, the organization holds a monopoly on the use of force, and in that way is sovereign, and the Lebanese government fears confronting the group's military for fear of its capabilities (Simon & Stevenson 2001, 33). The need for Hezbollah's armed forces stem from a long history of anarchy in Lebanon, as there was never a state with a sufficiently strong military institution to ensure the security of the nation. Countless military organizations, all of which Hezbollah has surpassed, have risen and fallen in efforts to provide security for Lebanon.

Second, Hezbollah has a defined internal structure with power distributed among numerous individuals and offices. This structure developed in the late 1980s, as the group sought to solidify itself as a political entity (Hamzeh 1993, 325–26). Hezbollah's head body is the Supreme Shura Council, which consists of seventeen members and exercises

legislative, executive, judicial, and administration authority over the organization.³ The Shura Council has historically been the core of a collective leadership structure, which distinguished Hezbollah from similar groups that relied on a single charismatic individual for leadership. This thesis explores how one individual, Nasrallah, has emerged as a prominent individual, though even with Nasrallah in command, the structure remains relatively intact. In that regard, the Council typically makes decisions unanimously or by majority vote; in the event it is deadlocked, the body submits its options to Ayatollah Khamenei for a decision. Hezbollah's day-to-day operations are overseen and executed by a Secretary-General, who administers the affairs of the organization and leads the committee of regional Hezbollah officials. Hassan Nasrallah is the third Secretary-General of Hezbollah and by far the longest-serving. The power structure of the organization includes several specialized committees—agencies to oversee agriculture, power resources, water resources, health, welfare, reconstruction, and the environment—and a politburo to oversee them. In the absence of a viable Lebanese state over the past several decades, Hezbollah has emerged as a full-fledged political force, moving itself beyond mere militia status and developing a leadership structure not unlike that of many states.

Third, Hezbollah offers a network of social services to the population living in the area in which it operates, largely due to the weak Lebanese state's inability or unwillingness to provide them. Even before Hezbollah, in the 1970s and 1980s, organizations developed to assist the Shi'a population of Lebanon (Deeb 2006). Because the sect was under-represented

³ It should be noted that, rhetorically, Allah, the Prophet Muhammad, imams, and the Iranian Ayatollah, in that order, are actually placed above the organizational framework of Hezbollah (Hamzeh 2004, 46).

in the national government, Shi'a leaders did not have the political power to achieve sufficient aid allocations to Shi'a areas of the country. Accordingly, institutions emerged to fill in this gap, and Hezbollah picked up the cause early in its history. Today, the organization runs schools, hospitals, discount pharmacies, grocery stores, garbage collection services, and orphanages, among other things (Wright 2006). In addition, Hezbollah runs programs that offer nutritional and health assistance for those in need, and it operates reconstruction services for those whose property was damaged by fighting on Lebanese soil (Deeb 2006). Similarly, the group provides support for the families of the group's soldiers killed in combat with Israel (Wright 2006). Hezbollah is Lebanon's second-largest employer, and it is estimated that 250,000 people benefit from its welfare programs. While most of its services are offered in predominantly Shi'a areas, it does not restrict non-Shi'a Lebanese citizens from taking advantage of them (Deeb 2006). All of these social services are funded by donations from Lebanese Shi'a at home and abroad, by religious taxes and alms-giving, and by foreign aid. Through its social services, Hezbollah has built strong ties to the people of Lebanon and in that sense can claim a "population." Among those in its population are official party members, members of the security apparatus, workers and volunteers in the social sector, voters who support the party in elections, those who benefit from the security and social services, and those hundreds of thousands of Lebanese citizens who self-identify as people of Hezbollah.

Fourth, Hezbollah has ties to particular areas of land and accordingly the security of a specific geographic area. The organization has always been specific to Lebanon, and despite any changes to the group in its more than twenty-five years in existence, it remains distinctly Lebanese. The group's presence, however, can be pinned down with even more geographic

specificity than “Lebanon” generally. Hezbollah emerged in the Bekaa Valley, the southern suburbs of Beirut, and throughout southern Lebanon, and there it has largely remained (Wege 1997, 155). While its physical and political presence is felt beyond these areas, and indeed its precise “borders” change slightly with the passage of time, it is possible to map out specific cities and communities in which it is the effective sovereign and thereby identify what one scholar has labeled “Hezbollahland” (Byman 2003, 60). In this sense, the organization “is a stakeholder in the existing regional order, not a force bent on destroying it,” which further distinguishes Hezbollah from nomadic groups akin to al-Qaeda, which are effectively without ties to the fate of specific lands. In Lebanon, and certainly in some areas more than others, anarchy has been the order of the day since the nation’s founding. Accordingly, groups like Hezbollah emerged to provide some sort of sovereignty and stability over these lands.

Finally, Hezbollah meets the condition that, to apply state-based theories of behavior, a non-state actor must have the capacity to carry out its own foreign policy. As further discussions will demonstrate, despite how anyone casts Hezbollah’s objectives and actions, it acts independent of the state of Lebanon—and, as we will see, independent of other states as well. While the group’s relationship with the official government in Beirut has wavered over time between positive and negative, Hezbollah has never truly submitted itself to the authority of the recognized Lebanese government. In that sense, the state has been unable to constrain it from acting as it pleased to carry out its objectives and improve its strategic position in national and regional affairs. While it is believed that, if no one else, Syria and Iran have the capacity to control the foreign policy of the organization, my analysis below shows that this is not—or is no longer—the case. In the absence of a strong Lebanese

government exercising sovereignty over southern Lebanon and the other Hezbollah strongholds, Hezbollah emerged to fill the power vacuum and, in doing so, formulates and executes its own policies toward neighboring powers. With the conditions met for applying theories meant to explain state actions to non-state entities, my analysis continues by applying the state-based Great Men Theory to Hezbollah and its leader.

E. Nasrallah as a “Great Man”

Indeed it may be impossible to effectively define a “great man” for the purposes of applying the Great Men Theory, and most likely, the passage of time may be a requirement in determining which leaders stand out in history as “great.” However, Byman and Pollack, in formulating their theories, simply considered individual leaders in history who “demonstrate the importance of individuals regardless of political system, period of time, or region of the world” (2001, 115). This standard led them to studies of Hitler; Bismarck and Kaiser Wilhelm II; Napoleon; Saddam Hussein and Hafez al-Asad; and Ayatollah Khomeini (114–15). These are all leaders associated with strong cults of personalities, some forced, others stemming more from the populations under their leadership, with charisma playing a major role in the latter.

A similar cult of personality has developed around Hassan Nasrallah, who is now praised across the Arab world and recognized universally as a key figure in regional politics. His image can be found on posters, billboards, key chains, and stickers from Lebanon, to Egypt, to Syria, to Mauritania (Fielder 2006). Recordings of his speeches can be heard on taxi cab radios—in lieu of music—and on mobile phones as ringtones throughout the region (Wright 2006). He has been likened to both legendary and contemporary heroes of the Arab world, including 12th century Kurdish sultan Saladin and former Egyptian President—and

pan-Arab champion—Gamal Abdel Nasser (Fielder 2006). In an area of the Middle East not far from Iraq, where Sunni and Shi‘a militant groups are engaged in violent conflict, Nasrallah brings members of the two religious sects together and also counts Christian and secular groups among his supporters (Fielder 2006; Knickmeyer 2006). His popularity within the organization is so strong that, in 1998, the party removed term limits from its official rules so that he could continue to legally serve as Secretary-General (Saouli 2003, 78). Nasrallah routinely meets with the representatives of national governments, and in 2000, he was granted an audience with then United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan to discuss Israel’s presence in southern Lebanon (BBC 2000). Certainly Hassan Nasrallah is more than a run-of-the-mill leader of a non-state actor: he is able to command attention—from remote Bedouin villages of Arabia to the central nerves of global government—and is likened by Arab populations to their “great” leaders of the past and present. As one young woman told a reporter in Beirut in 2006, “Nasrallah’s not an ordinary person He’s something from God to us” (Fielder 2006). Accordingly, I do not hesitate in treating Nasrallah as a “great man” for this analysis.

Given Nasrallah’s widespread recognition and his prestige as an influential figure in the politics of the Middle East, methodologically speaking, Nasrallah is an appropriate case for study under the Great Men Theory. Accordingly, testing Nasrallah’s leadership of Hezbollah will not only tell us more about Hezbollah and which forces drive its behavior, but it will also add to the literature on individual-level theories and speak to their ability to be adapted to various international relations inquiries.

IV. FOUR HYPOTHESES

This thesis examines four hypotheses, three of which are derived from the first-image work of Byman and Pollack and one of which is an alternative hypothesis that follows the popular conceptions of Hezbollah's behavioral influences. The first hypothesis states that Hezbollah's actions are explained by an individual leader's calculations of strategy for sustaining the organization and realizing its objectives. This is derived from Byman and Pollack's third hypothesis, which asserts that individual leaders shape state strategies. My second hypothesis to test in each of my cases states that Hezbollah's actions are a reflection of an individual leader's efforts to shape the group internally. This hypothesis is roughly based on Byman and Pollack's arguments that individual leaders can shape the second image and that their relationships with the state's character and structure affect the foreign policies of the entities they lead. Third, I will test the hypothesis that Hezbollah's actions are driven by an individual leader's quest for personal power and prestige, which is based on Byman and Pollack's insistence that personalities may be important in understanding how states act. Finally, my fourth hypothesis reflects the traditional perception of Hezbollah as a puppet or proxy by asserting that Hezbollah's actions are directed by external forces, namely Iran and Syria.

In examining Hezbollah under these hypotheses, I expect to see the role of the individual leader increase over time and the role of Hezbollah's allies to correspondingly decrease. I base my predictions on the organization's increasing independence and on Nasrallah's unique ability to exert his preferences on the organization. In its early years, Hezbollah depended on outside assistance for every aspect of its existence: it lacked financial and operational resources, military training, a power structure, a popular support

base, and any sense of direction beyond survival in the midst of civil war. Despite its founding by zealous political and military figures, the group could not possibly become a powerful military and political force overnight, particularly if it was unable to think beyond immediate, on-the-ground survival. To overcome the new organization's deficiencies and its inevitable "tunnel vision," Iran and Syria were needed to facilitate its operations and ensure its broader political relevance.

Conditions, however, have changed since the early 1980s. As Hezbollah has matured as an organization, its hard and soft power capabilities have increased to the extent that it does not require outside direction to identify and pursue its goals. It has developed its own internal institutions, its own divisions of labor and power, and its own social mandate, while simultaneously solidifying the organizational structure and increasing the capabilities of its military wing. At the same time, the group has learned to define and redefine its own interests and act to pursue them. As a result, Hezbollah has become an organization that can wield power in national and regional settings based on its own credibility and capacity, which necessarily means that Syria and Iran are not needed as they once were. Because the organization has taken on a life of its own, I expect to see that the influence of Iran and Syria on Hezbollah's actions and ideologies has diminished significantly with the passage of time.

Hezbollah's increased ability to act independently motivates us to question the proxy theory and instead look at the group itself to understand its actions. Having outlined the basis for examining Nasrallah as a "great man" who could drive the organization's activities, I expect to see that the Secretary-General's preferences have in fact been realized during his

time in power.⁴ As Hezbollah's need for outside direction has become less and less urgent, the individual leader has had more space for determining how it should act to achieve its objectives. Such an opening was ideal for Nasrallah, whose astute pragmatism has made him one of the region's most effective leaders. Due to his unique ability to calculate which conflicts should be avoided and which obstacles should be confronted, I expect to see that Nasrallah has been successful in implementing his personal preferences for the group's strategies and internal dynamics since he took command. In addition, since 1992, we have seen marked increases in Nasrallah's fame and in his ability to draw attention from all segments of Lebanon and the broader Arab world. He has strengthened the power of Hezbollah significantly during his tenure, and in doing so, his personal prestige has skyrocketed. Accordingly, I am led to believe that he now considers his fame when making decisions for the group he leads and that his strategies for bolstering his power and prestige help to explain the path Hezbollah has taken under his leadership.

⁴ At the same time, I do not expect the first three hypotheses to be very effective in explaining Hezbollah's behavior prior to the arrival of Nasrallah. It was not until the early 1990s that the organization—or its leader—had the capacity or the opportunity to act without strong outside direction.

V. BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

A. The Party of God

Before testing my hypotheses, brief biographical sketches will provide historical context for the organization and its current leader. Hezbollah—“the Party of God”—finds its roots in the early 1980s in the midst of civil war in Lebanon, partially in response to the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon and partially to provide a voice for the under-empowered Lebanese Shi‘a population (Deeb 2006). After Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 to push back Palestinian Liberation Organization fighters, Hezbollah’s predecessor, the Amal movement, began to wane in popularity and effectiveness. In response, small Shi‘a militias quickly formed and eventually banded together to form the Party of God, including its military branch, the Islamic Resistance,⁵ both of which formally announced themselves to the world in a February 1985 letter. Much of the group’s initial support was provided by Syria and Iran, the latter having experienced its Shi‘a Islamic Revolution just a few years prior, and the two nations have continued to support Hezbollah in intelligence, technology, and financing. This support has been the basis for the proxy theory that has come to dominate public discourse on the organization and official policies toward all of the entities involved.

Hezbollah and its military wing have since earned a violent reputation with the West. The United States government, among others, lists Hezbollah as a terrorist organization (U.S. Dept. of State 2005), although an overwhelming majority of its contemporary violence has

⁵ Both in previous and later sections, this thesis uses “Hezbollah” to refer to the entire organization, including the political, economical, social, and military branches, unless one or more of the branches is referenced specifically.

been directed at Israel and Israeli interests (Deeb 2006). The Lebanese civil war finally ended in 1990 with the Ta'if Agreement, which had been signed the previous year. The treaty called for the disarmament of militia groups in Lebanon, though Hezbollah was exempted as a national resistance movement (Early 2006, 122). Accordingly, Hezbollah and Israel have frequently found themselves exchanging acts of violence, even after Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000 (Deeb 2006). The most glaring example is the Israeli-Hezbollah war that took place in the summer of 2006, which is the source of much of the Arab world's support for the organization and its leader. Over time, Hezbollah has also become a social force in Lebanon, as described previously, offering social services and support that the Lebanese government has been unable to provide. This social role has enhanced the organization's standing among Arabs.

B. Hassan Nasrallah

Current Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah was born in the suburbs of Beirut in 1960, one of nine children born to a poor grocer and his wife in a religiously mixed community (Fielder 2006; BBC 2006). When civil war broke out in the country in 1975, Nasrallah's family moved to southern Lebanon, where his ancestors had lived (BBC 2006). As a teenager and young adult, Nasrallah studied the Qur'an and politics at top Shi'a seminaries in Iran and Iraq (Fielder 2006; BBC 2006). Several of these years were spent in Najaf, where Nasrallah met Sayyad Abbas Musawi, a man who would precede him as Secretary-General of the organization (BBC 2006). Nasrallah was banished from Iraq in the late 1970s, along with other Lebanese students studying religion, and he returned home to Lebanon, where he joined the Amal movement and thereby became involved in politics.

After the Israeli invasion in 1982, Nasrallah, along with many others, grew rapidly discontent with Amal. He therefore joined with other Amal defectors to become one of the founding members of the Hezbollah movement (BBC 2006). Upon the assassination of Secretary-General Musawi by the Israeli government in 1992, Nasrallah was appointed to assume Musawi's post with the endorsement of Iran (Fielder 2006). Nasrallah's son was killed in 1997 by Israeli troops, and his astute public handling of this event earned him respect from all reaches of Lebanese society. Throughout his tenure as the leader of Hezbollah, Nasrallah has grown in popularity both in Lebanon and throughout the Arab world. He is widely credited with driving Israel out of southern Lebanon in 2000, and he commanded the organization in its war against the state of Israel in the summer of 2006. The BBC notes that "[d]iplomats and others who have met [Nasrallah] describe him as highly intelligent, widely-read and politically astute" (BBC 2006). Nasrallah frequently grants interviews to national, regional, and international media outlets, which has removed some of the secrecy that surrounds many leaders like him.

VI. WHO CONTROLS HEZBOLLAH?

In order to evaluate the role of individual leaders in determining Hezbollah's behavior, I will examine four important milestones in the history of the organization: (1) the foundation of the movement in the early 1980s; (2) the Ta'if Agreement ending the Lebanese Civil War in 1989; (3) the Lebanese General Elections in 1992; and (4) the summer 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah. The analysis will explore the individual leader hypotheses vis-à-vis the proxy theory in the context of Hezbollah's behavior during each time period. While I am particularly concerned with Nasrallah's influence on the group's behavior, he did not hold the office of Secretary-General during the first two cases. He was, however, a prominent figure in the organization. Therefore, his influence on Hezbollah's behavior and policies during the group's first decade will be analyzed, in addition to other individual leaders.

These specific events were selected as cases in this study for their significance in the histories of both Hezbollah and Lebanon and also for the opportunities that they presented the Party of God for acting. Each case represents an event that had widespread effects on Lebanon and beyond. Hezbollah's founding amidst the civil war marked a birth that would change the course of Lebanese history and is therefore well-suited as a starting point for my analysis. The end of the civil war also represents a major event in the nation's history, as an entire generation of Lebanese was raised under the realities of domestic conflict, and its end therefore transformed the political realities within the nation. At the same time, the event was significant to the Party of God in that it marked the end of the era from which it rose and, consequently, it forced the group to reexamine its purposes and the direction it would follow in the years ahead. The 1992 elections, again, represent a major event in Lebanese

history, as these post-war elections were the country's first in two decades and therefore occurred with high political stakes and questionable outcomes. Likewise, this was a significant event in Hezbollah's history: the election provided the organization with an opportunity to consider its ambitions for the future and act accordingly in a character-defining manner. The year 1992 also marked the first year of Hassan Nasrallah's leadership of the Party of God, and it is therefore the first opportunity to examine his personal effect on the group's behavior.

Finally, the last case represents the most significant recent event in the history of Lebanon and Hezbollah—the time surrounding the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel, which was fought almost exclusively on Lebanese soil. The Lebanese had not seen violence of this magnitude since the civil war, and the aftermath of the event confirmed the power of Hezbollah as a formidable force in the nation and region. The shifting attitudes of the Lebanese toward the organization and ongoing resistance efforts against Israel provided Hezbollah an opportunity for a grand event to publicize its capabilities and make clear its intentions for its political future. Because this significant event occurred fewer than two years ago, its inclusion in this case study means that we can better understand Hezbollah as it lives and breathes today. Before addressing recent events, however, my analysis begins with the organization's formation.

VII. THE BIRTH OF THE PARTY OF GOD (1982–1985)

The Lebanese Shi‘a population had always been “a backward, rural community” and “underdogs of the population,” despite its status as the largest sect in Lebanon by the 1960s (Jaber 1997, 8–9). The community had suffered through a history of persecution by Christian and Sunni Lebanese, and by foreign occupiers, and the sect was unable to practice freely until Lebanon fell under a French mandate in the 1920s (9). When a confessional system was devised for Lebanon, the intentional use of old population statistics by the French and other Lebanese groups resulted in disproportionately low representation and power for the Shi‘a community (10–11). Accordingly, as Hala Jaber explains, with little influence in Beirut, “their standard of living was medieval” even through much of the 20th century (11). Conditions were ripe for a movement that would represent the needs of the long-oppressed Shi‘a community in Lebanon.

Musa al-Sadr, who was born in Iran but whose family was from southern Lebanon, emerged in the late 1950s to pick up the Shi‘a cause and is now credited with politicizing the Shi‘a population of Lebanon (Jaber 1997, 14). Al-Sadr led the founding of the Amal movement—“amal” being Arabic for “hope”—in the mid-1970s to provide a voice for the Shi‘a in Lebanon through political activities but also through its armed wing, which became a major actor in the civil war that erupted in 1975 (12). The Amal militia was originally trained and armed by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), though relations with the group soured quickly as the PLO drew more and more intense Israeli fire into the Shi‘a areas of southern Lebanon from which the PLO operated. By the time Israel entered in 1982, Amal and Israel were both intent on the PLO’s departure and thus a safe Lebanese-Israeli

border, but Amal members were divided on how to handle Israel, given Israel's desire to install a more "friendly" government in Beirut (Norton, "Domestic" 2007, 476).⁶

Many disaffected Amal members broke away completely, including experienced political-military figures like Hassan Nasrallah and Subhi al-Tufayli, both future Secretary-Generals of Hezbollah (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 14–15). Others formed a splinter group called Islamic Amal, which joined with a number of other resistance groups and collapsed into the Party of God (Wege 1994, 154). Augustus Norton (Hezbollah 2007), a noted Hezbollah scholar, notes that long-time members of the organization frequently claim a 1982 birth for Hezbollah, in order to more closely associate it with the 1982 Israeli invasion, although Norton argues that at this point in time the group was little more than a conspiracy circle planning small attacks on Western and Israeli interests (34). Most of the founding members of Hezbollah were devout revolutionaries in their twenties— Nasrallah, for instance, was twenty-two.

In February 1985, Hezbollah formally announced its formation and its vision to the world in a letter addressed to the "Downtrodden in Lebanon and in the World," and it began its operations (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 35). Many of Hezbollah's early activities involved small-scale guerrilla attacks on Israeli and Western interests. Americans first learned of Hezbollah in 1983 when Party of God militiamen carried out suicide bombings on the U.S. embassy in Beirut and attacks on a marine barracks, which took the lives of 250 Americans (Byman 2003, 57). The Party of God fighters also carried out countless suicide missions

⁶ Also by this time, the influence of Musa al-Sadr had faded away, as the Shi'a leader mysteriously disappeared in the course of a diplomatic trip to Libya in 1978.

against Israeli property and personnel in southern Lebanon as “young Shiite fighters volunteered to drive vehicles packed with explosives into Israeli targets” (Jaber 1997, 22).

So, what was the driving force behind Hezbollah’s behavior in its founding era?

A. Hypothesis 1: Leader’s Calculations of Strategy

The strategy of Hezbollah in its formidable years was little more than survival, which would have been on the minds of all members of the Party of God. After all, many Shi‘a militias were rising and falling in the midst of the Israeli invasion, and Hezbollah had to compete with both new groups and its influential predecessor Amal. In light of the competition, those who banded together to form the Party of God had to struggle to hold together their operations and also to gain support from religious officials and the Shi‘a public. Because there was no internal organizational structure in its first several years, there was no identifiable individual leader of Hezbollah during this time whose calculations of strategies to survive and realize group objectives could have driven the group’s behavior. Actions ordered by individuals were all carried out in local settings, and the lack of a power structure meant that scattered militias would have been bound by little more than their shared missions of resisting foreign occupiers and working to better the economic and social conditions of the Lebanese Shi‘a community. While future individual leaders of the group—particularly Secretary-Generals al-Tufayli, Musawi, and Nasrallah—were among the founders, none of them were yet in positions to exercise the power that would have permitted them to calculate strategic actions for a unified Party of God, which also did not exist during the period under consideration in this case.

B. Hypothesis 2: Leader's Shaping of the Group Internally

Similar problems apply in considering the second hypothesis related to individual leaders in this first case: there was no identifiable Hezbollah leader in the group's founding era. As a result, an individual would be unable to take action that would shape the internal dynamic and identity of the organization. While the various individuals who formed the Party of God would have certainly been conscious of the group's internal character, no single individuals would have been able to exercise the authority required to forge that character. The only individual who could possibly be analyzed under this category was a popular Shi'a religious figure in Beirut, Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, labeled by many observers as the group's spiritual advisor. It is said that Fadlallah was one of the key individuals in formulating Hezbollah's ideology (Hamzeh 1993, 323), and he is credited with enhancing its standing among the Lebanese Shi'a community through his public support and encouragement of the activities of the young organization (Wege 1994, 154). Fadlallah also provided important religious justification for the group, authoring a book "that provided intellectual and theological justification for a militant and armed Shi'a response to Lebanon's anarchy" (155). While he may well have affected the internal character of the group, there is little evidence in the literature that directly ties him to the sort of power that would have allowed him to use group action to mold this character. Naim Qassem, a long-time top Hezbollah official, even noted in his 2005 book that Fadlallah never even had the spiritual advisor role that many seem to assign him (17). Qassem attributes this mistake to the lack of any other visible individual leaders in the early days of the group; once a power structure developed, he notes, the perception of Fadlallah's influence greatly diminished. Thus, while

the religious leader may have had indirect effects on shaping the young Party of God, he did not occupy the sort of position that gave him authority over the group.

C. Hypothesis 3: Leader's Personal Quest for Power and Prestige

Again, there is no clear individual leader to examine under this hypothesis, as the conditions of surviving against Israel and against other military groups did not permit quests for personal power or prestige. Indeed, a number of individuals that would be important within the organization later were involved in Hezbollah's formation, including the only three Secretary-Generals to serve thus far; however, leadership positions were not defined so early in the group's history. To repeat what Naim Qassem (2005) said regarding the announcement of the group in 1985, many observers assigned a leadership role to Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah simply because they had no other personalities to identify with the group (17). Regardless of any influence Fadlallah may have had with helping the group to define itself, however, he already enjoyed a position of prestige within religious and political circles, and there is little evidence in historical accounts that he had attached himself so strongly that he would be able to act through it to enhance his own stature.

Accordingly, even important individuals like Subhi al-Tufayli, Abbas Musawi, and Hassan Nasrallah were in no position to seek power or prestige by driving the actions of the organization. Only in very localized settings—e.g., within any militias they commanded—could these individuals seek to improve their own standings, but such efforts would have had little organization in higher circles amidst war and chaos. Further, because a formal organization structure did not develop until the late 1980s, individuals were largely unable to make decisions on behalf of Hezbollah as a whole—all decisions would have been local. As Norton (Hezbollah 2007) has stated, the founding members of Hezbollah essentially

constituted a conspiracy group in the organization's first few years, an inherently private arrangement that would have discouraged individuals from distinguishing themselves among higher-level audiences (34).

D. Hypothesis 4: External Forces Driving Behavior

As the ubiquity of the proxy theory would suggest, the literature is replete with the influence of Syria and Iran during Hezbollah's early years. There is evidence that the two nations chiseled the group's objectives, made it possible for Hezbollah to carry out those objectives through their support, and used the organization for their own gains. In short, both and Syria and Iran were eager to have pawns operating in the Levant.

The Iranian Revolution was certainly an inspiration to the Shi'a of Lebanon, as it compelled many young activists to band together into the small militias that later joined to form Hezbollah (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 10–11). Indeed, Amal Saad-Ghorayeb notes that "it is unlikely that the Islamic resistance would have been launched, and the party subsequently formed, without a revolutionary paradigm to inspire it" (14). Musa al-Sadr, born and trained in the Shi'a schools of Iraq and Iran, would have helped to spread the spirit of the revolution to southern Lebanon, where many members of the Shi'a community shared familial and religious ties with Iran and where al-Sadr operated a school that many Hezbollah founders attended (Jaber 1997, 25–26). Therefore, with seeds of Iranian influence planted throughout southern Lebanon, Iran was handily able to step in and shape the new organization.

While Hezbollah began its life as a scattered group of co-conspirators, it finally put together its official program of objectives in 1985. At this time, Saad-Ghorayeb remarks that "the fountainhead of Hizbu'llah was not even located in Lebanon but in the religious academies of Najaf in Iraq where hundreds of young Lebanese Shi'ites studied in the early

1960s and 1970s under the tutelage of radical Shi'ite ideologues such as Khomeini," the Iranian Grand Ayatollah and leader of the Iranian Revolution (13). Accordingly, as Augustus Norton (Hezbollah 2007) notes, the February 1985 letter that proclaimed Hezbollah's establishment "bears a strong made-in-Tehran coloration" (35). The document lashes out at both the United States and the Soviet Union as cornerstones of the "arrogant world," reflecting the Iran stance on the competing superpowers (36). With Americans present in Lebanon in the early 1980s attempting to stabilize the Israeli border, the announcement proclaims that Hezbollah will resist the American forces, in adherence to the call of "Imam Khomeini, the leader," who attributes the problems of Lebanon to American intervention and to its support of Israel (37). Of course, the announcement also includes in the group's objectives the liberation of Palestine from Israeli occupation, which would have been a shared concern between Iran and the people of Lebanon (36). What is perhaps more surprising is the form of the criticism of France contained in the letter. While outrage over France's colonial favoritism of the Maronite Christians was to be expected, the announcement additionally lashes out at French efforts to supply Iraq in the ongoing Iraq-Iran War, clearly an Iranian concern (37). Finally, the Hezbollah announcement calls for a fundamentalist Islamic system of government in Lebanon that would be an imitation, though not explicit, of the "Iranian model" installed after the 1979 Iranian Revolution (39-40). Accordingly, to Iran, "Hezbollah was a realization of the revolutionary states' zealous campaign to spread the message of the self-styled 'Islamic Revolution'" to other states (34). Not surprisingly, during the 1982 to 1985 span, pictures of Ayatollah Khomeini began to appear throughout southern Lebanon as Hezbollah "announc[ed] the arrival of a movement

which derived its influence from Iran and not from the secular path of Amal” (Jaber 1997, 19).

After directing the objectives of the Party of God, Iran worked to realize those objectives, with the support and assistance of Syria. In 1982, as Hezbollah was forming, Iran sent 1500 members of its Revolutionary Guard to southern Lebanon to train and equip militias to fight against Israeli and Western forces (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 19). Syria, eager for allies in Lebanon to fight the United States and Israel and eager to boost its relationship with Iran, made possible their passage from the Islamic Republic. Upon arrival, the guardsmen failed quickly in their attempts to co-opt Amal for Iranian purposes, so they gathered together the emerging resistance militias to form the Party of God.

Iran and Syria continued to prop the young organization in its formative years in a number of ways, though it is fair to say that Iran’s support for Hezbollah was more enthusiastic than that of Syria, which verged more toward toleration than support. Syria, at the time, was more focused on supporting Amal, which made it initially weary of the competing Party of God (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 35). Not wanting to threaten its relationship with Iran, however, Syria provided the assistance requested in nurturing Hezbollah. The Iranians ran much of their support for Hezbollah through their embassy in Syria, despite the latter’s affection for Amal (31); and they are said to have sent financial assistance in the range of \$90 to \$100 million annually during the 1980s (Wege 1994, 158). All of this made possible Hezbollah’s early activities described above. Iran, for instance, arranged car bomb attacks on Western interests by providing the technology and training that the group would not have had otherwise. In addition to its practical support, the Islamic Republic has consistently provided bureaucratic connections and political advisement to the

Lebanese group (156). As Saad-Ghorayeb (2002) has explained, “without Iran’s political, financial and logistical support, its military capability or organizational development would have been greatly retarded. Even by Hizbu’llah’s reckoning, it would have taken an additional 50 years for the movement to score the same achievements in the absence of Iranian backing” (14).

Guiding the activities of Hezbollah was of great advantage to both Iran and Syria. For Iran, it had a force for exporting the Shi‘a revolution, as it sought to make the group the “sole Shiite Islamic force in the country” of Lebanon “as a prelude to Iran’s final phase of replacing the Lebanese political system with an Islamic order” (Jaber 1997, 31). In doing so, Iran would create a permanent and subservient ally in the Levant, and further social, religious, and political manipulation in the region could potentially create a “Shi‘a crescent” of Islamic governance cutting through the region. At the same time, Iran was able to go after Israel and the United States and their efforts to shape the region by training, arming, and financing the Party of God, potentially at the expense of the Lebanese goals of the organization. Indeed, Carl Wege (1994) notes that “Iran has directed its support towards its goals against the US and Israel, not towards the needs of the Lebanese Shi‘a population” (156). Certainly Iran was most interested in supporting Hezbollah to carry out its own policies in Lebanon and was less concerned about the specific social context that had produced the Party of God.

While Syria frequently pitted the militia groups against one another so that it was ultimately in control, well-funded and well-equipped groups like Hezbollah served an important purpose for Damascus. These groups could directly attack Israeli and American interests in the Levant, which Syria itself could not do (El-Hokayem 2007, 36–37). By

supporting Hezbollah's formation and early activities, Syria was able to increase its ability to go after these foreign forces, and it was still able to manipulate the relationship between the new group and Amal so that it could maintain its monopoly of control over the activities of southern Lebanon (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 35). Given the evidence contained in this description, it is not difficult to see the inspiration for the now ubiquitous proxy theory that is used to explain the organization's behavior. Certainly the imprint of both Iran and Syria on Hezbollah in its formative years is unmistakable, as this discussion has illustrated.

VIII. TA'IF AGREEMENT (1989)

With the Lebanese Civil War reaching the fifteen-year mark, battles continued to rage between Christian and Muslim forces, between Lebanese and Syrian forces, and between groups within the same confession (Krayem).⁷ Due to the escalation of inter-confessional strife and the Lebanese army's increased attacks on Syrian forces in Lebanon, "public intolerance for the continuation of the civil war and support for a quick settlement grew rapidly," particularly as the Lebanese public realized that no movement nor even confession had the capacity to "win." Concurrently, international interest over an end to the conflict reached a new high. After Iraq began to support the Lebanese army against Syria in 1989, Saudi Arabia became concerned over the possibility of the entire region falling into conflict. At the same time, the United States viewed the war in Lebanon as a threat to the Arab-Israeli peace process and therefore encouraged a speedy resolution. As all of these interests for peace converged, Saudi Arabia's King Fahd joined with the leaders of Morocco and Algeria into a Tripartite Committee to address Lebanon.

Following discussions with leaders in Lebanon, Syria, and the United States, the Tripartite Committee invited sixty-two Lebanese legislators—those who remained of the ninety-nine elected during the last pre-war elections in 1972—to meet in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, in October of 1989, to discuss prospects for ending the civil war (Krayem). After more than three weeks of deliberations, the Ta'if Agreement—or, officially, the National Accord Document—emerged as a solution to the conflict. The Agreement was quickly ratified in

⁷ The struggle between Amal and Hezbollah for the soul of southern Lebanon provided the most prominent example of the last type of conflict.

Lebanon and implemented over the course of the following year, during which time inter-confessional conflicts gradually came to a halt, in part because warring factions realized that the inconclusiveness of their back-and-forth fighting left them only with political options for ending the war.

The Ta'if Agreement included a wide variety of provisions aimed at reconciliation among Lebanon's various religious and ideological groups. The most relevant to the discussion of Hezbollah are the terms related to militias and to reforms of the national legislature. Under Ta'if, militia groups of all forms were required to disband in the interest of preventing further conflict. Accordingly, in the eyes of Hezbollah, the accord directly "threatened the very survival of the movement" (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 52–53). This presented the Party of God with its first question: should it lay down its arms in pursuit of the peace sought by the Ta'if Agreement, or should it defy the Agreement and continue to wield its increasing power in southern Lebanon and beyond? Second, the agreement ordered constitutional reforms that would shift confessional power divisions. While Maronites formerly enjoyed a majority of legislative seats, Ta'if ordered that the number of seats be split evenly between Christians and Muslims. Further, it reassigned many of the executive powers formerly held by the Maronite president to a cabinet of ministers (Jaber 1997, 71). These reforms presented Hezbollah with a second question: should it continue its pursuit of a revolution for an Islamic state, or should it take advantage of a supposedly leveled playing field and participate in the Lebanese political process as a party? This case examines the first of these questions, and the following case examines the second in the context of the first post-war elections in 1992.

A. Hypothesis 1: Leader's Calculations of Strategy

As discussed previously, the Party of God did not develop a coherent organizational power structure until the late 1980s (Hamzeh 1993, 325–26). The election of the first Hezbollah Secretary-General, therefore, did not take place until Subhi al-Tufayli was selected in 1989 amidst the end of the Lebanese civil war. Accordingly, the movement now had an official head and one who had a clear vision for the future of the organization, and the Secretary-General's answer to Hezbollah's first post-Ta'if question was that the group should reject the Agreement's requirement for the group to disarm and to continue pursuing its founding objectives. As Hamzeh (2004) explains, Tufayli "sought to keep Hizbullah in a state of perpetual jihad against all those who opposed their vision of an Islamic order," both in the Lebanese sphere and with regard to foreign elements on Lebanese soil (110). In doing so, he argues that Tufayli saw the group's future down a "one-way street" focused exclusively on armed struggle and without any involvement in political arrangements to achieve its objectives (111). In this opportune time to define how it would advance its interests under a new reality in Lebanon, Hezbollah did not follow the path envisioned by Subhi Tufayli. Instead, in the end, it followed the path of the two later Secretary-Generals, Musawi and Nasrallah, though not without the input of Iran and Syria, as discussed below.

B. Hypothesis 2: Leader's Shaping of the Group Internally

In the aftermath of the Lebanese civil war, Hezbollah's leader had an opportunity to mold—or even transform—the internal character of the organization. Its leader, however, did not have any such transformation in mind. As recounted under Hypothesis 1, Secretary-General Subhi al-Tufayli envisioned "more of the same" for the organization, which would involve an exclusively militant approach to an Islamic revolution in Lebanon. In advocating

a “one-way street limited to armed struggle” rather than a “two-way street of armed and unarmed struggle,” Tufayli “pressed for tight party discipline and limited contacts with outside groups” (Hamzeh 2004, 110–11). Secretary-General Tufayli did not envision the group transforming itself from a mere revolutionary group, nor did he, therefore, envision the organization as part of any “bigger picture.” Eventually, Iran and Syria cast their votes on the organization’s future, much to the detriment of Hezbollah’s first leader: Tufayli was permitted to finish his two-year term for the sake of party unity but was then ousted in 1991 at its conclusion (110).

C. Hypothesis 3: Leader’s Personal Quest for Power and Prestige

While in this second case there is a leader to identify who could be directing the group in his own pursuit of power, there is nothing in the literature that suggests Subhi al-Tufayli’s vision for the organization in post-war Lebanon was an attempt to do so. To the contrary, there is little evidence of even an opportunity for Tufayli to seek personal glory in the group’s direction. Installed as Secretary-General in the last year of the war, the first half of his term was consumed by the organization’s day-to-day operations on the ground, which as discussed in the previous case, did not grant opportunities for widespread fame and personal advancement. During the second half of his term, Tufayli served his office as a defeated man, having lost the internal battle for the organization’s future. While this may have given him an incentive to direct the group in ways that would improve his standing, he was already on shaky terms with prominent figures in Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah itself and was only permitted to complete his term as Secretary-General “in order to prevent dissension within the party” (Hamzeh 2004, 110).

D. Hypothesis 4: External Forces Driving Behavior

The leaders of Iran and Syria had their own post-war visions for Hezbollah's future, and it is the interaction of Iranian and Syrian interests that saved the life of the organization from the threat of the Ta'if Agreement and defined its place in national and regional politics. During the late 1980s the Hezbollah-Syria relationship was nothing short of turbulent: after the group's forces in West Beirut rejected calls from the Syrian military to hand over its strongholds in the city, Syria attacked and killed nearly two dozen Hezbollah fighters in order to secure the areas it desired (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 52). At the same time, Damascus was heavily supporting the Amal movement against Hezbollah in the War for the Supremacy of the South. These attempts to contain Hezbollah were due in large part to Hafez al-Asad's fear of the organization becoming too powerful. If Hezbollah were to succeed in installing an Islamist government in Lebanon, Syria's interests in Lebanon would be threatened, if not destroyed, and Asad also feared the response of Islamists within Syria if its neighbor were to become an Islamic state.

For these reasons, Syria was deeply interested in an end to Lebanon's civil war, which would inevitably thwart Hezbollah's rapid rise. By early 1989, "Iran caved in to Syria's desire to see the war ended" and accepted the inevitability of a Syria-dominated Lebanon by drafting the Damascus Agreement and coercing Hezbollah to accept its terms (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 52). Under the Agreement, the Party of God was permitted to continue its campaign against Israeli occupation in southern Lebanon, but it had to withdraw from other areas where Syrian forces would step in to replace it. The arrangement effectively gave Damascus power of Hezbollah, and it set the stage for Syria's plan for the organization in post-war Lebanon.

In contrast to the plans of Tufayli, or even Musawi and Nasrallah for that matter, it was Syria's vision for Hezbollah in post-war Lebanon that prevailed. While working on the Damascus Agreement with Hezbollah and Iran, Syria was working with the international community on the Ta'if Agreement. Following the conclusion of the meetings that produced the final text, Hezbollah had little choice but to support it, despite its provisions related to disarming militias. Syria, after all, had been a "godfather" of the agreement (El-Hokayem 2007, 38), and Damascus was particularly pleased with its provisions that "recognised its military presence in the country" (Jaber 1997, 71–72).

Fortunately for Hezbollah, Syria had a plan for the Party of God that would avoid disarmament. Damascus knew that Hezbollah posed a threat to Israel and its interests, and therefore, if it would throw its support behind the organization, it would serve as an invaluable negotiating tool against Israel (El-Hokayem 2007, 38). At the same time, however, Syria wanted to limit Hezbollah's actions within Lebanon. In order to pursue both interests, Syria entered into an informal agreement with the organization that gave "official cover" for Hezbollah's continued armament under the condition that it would "minimize its participation in Lebanese economic and political affairs" (40). True to the agreement, Syria officially maintained that Hezbollah was a legitimate resistance movement—as opposed to a mere militia—that acted independently of Syria, though Asad would use his extensive security and intelligence services to secretly exert his influence on the organization (38–40). The Ta'if Agreement effectively "made Syria the key player in Lebanese politics" and the dominant power on the ground in Lebanon, subjecting all groups, including Hezbollah, to its will (Hamzeh 2004, 109).

Despite Syria's prominence in the conclusion of the Lebanese civil war, Iran continued to play a role in the activities of the Party of God during this period. After the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, Iran's new leadership at first appeared cold to militia organizations like Hezbollah (Norton, *Hezbollah* 2007, 44); however, the literature demonstrates that ties remained open between Tehran and the Party of God. Norton reports that, in spite of the tremendous pressure from Syria, Hezbollah did not throw its support toward the Ta'if Agreement until Iran "gave its blessing" (83). Thus, even if Iran had not have given up on its goal of using Hezbollah for Islamic revolution in Lebanon (Simon & Stevenson 2001, 35), it had at least resigned itself to the fact that Syria would dominate the Lebanese political scene for years to come and that an Islamic republic simply would not be possible during that time (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 52).

Accordingly, while the group's ties to Iranian religious figures may have remained strong, it was accepted that Syria had effective control on the ground and that the terms of the Ta'if Agreement would, at the very least, need to be tolerated (Hamzeh 2004, 109). There is evidence, nonetheless, that Iran initially had a more politically active vision for the organization before Syria coerced it—temporarily, as we will see—into an Israel-resistance-only role. When the Hezbollah leadership met in Tehran in 1989 to resolve the internal divide between the Musawi/Nasrallah "two-way street" faction and the Tufayli hard-line "one-way street" faction, Ayatollah Khomeini cast his support for the former, "urg[ing] Hizbullah to seek a foothold within the Lebanese system" (110). This was before the Ta'if Agreement's completion and Syria's informal offer to defend Hezbollah's armament in exchange for its minimal involvement in Lebanese politics. Still, Tufayli's disagreement with Iran cost him his Secretary-General position at the end of his first term (Hamzeh 2004,

110), and only a few short years would pass before Musawi, Nasrallah, and Khamenei's plans to enter politics would be realized.

IX. LEBANESE GENERAL ELECTION (1992)

The first post-war elections in Lebanon took place in late summer of 1992. For the first time in the organization's history, Hezbollah had an opportunity to act in the Lebanese political sphere, should it choose to do so. In following the terms of the Ta'if Agreement, the Lebanese constitution had been amended following the war's end to more evenly divide power among the confessions in Lebanon. Most importantly, the accord provided for equal numbers of seats in the legislature for Muslims and Christians, removing the previous Christian advantage (Jaber 1997, 71). In addition, the Ta'if document granted increased powers to the Muslim Prime Minister and diffused a number of the executive powers held formerly by the Maronite president to a chamber of ministers (Deeb 2006; Jaber 1997, 71). While many in the Party of God did see these reforms as significant improvements in confessional equality, the Lebanese Shi'a population as a whole had long been waiting for a stronger voice in national affairs.

Months before the 1992 election, Hezbollah Secretary-General Abbas Musawi, who was elected to the post in 1991 after the fall of Tufayli, had been assassinated, along with his family, by the Israeli government. In the aftermath of the Musawi's death, Hassan Nasrallah was chosen as Hezbollah's third leader, and on July 3, 1992, the new Secretary General announced that the organization would compete for seats in the upcoming election (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 101). This announcement stirred hope among the long-disenfranchised Shi'a community, particularly with regard to economic prospects. Not only would Hezbollah legislators have a voice in apportioning and approving the national budget, but they would also gain access to government jobs that could be awarded to members of the confession.

In the lead-up to the election, Hezbollah ran a campaign on substantive issues, addressing such themes as economic development and security, largely avoiding religious rhetoric (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 102).⁸ In the end, the Party of God won twelve seats—approximately ten percent of those available—in the national legislature, and the group has seen similar victories in subsequent elections (Norton, “Domestic” 2007, 481). Part of this success may be attributed to the desires of the Shi‘a community for stronger representation, but some of Hezbollah’s support can be traced to “thank you” votes cast by beneficiaries of the organization’s social programs (Hamzeh 1993, 332). Following its victories in 1992, Hezbollah became “the first Islamist bloc in the history of Lebanon to enter Parliament” (Hamzeh 2004, 113), and since it first entered politics, the party has built a solid reputation in its low levels of corruption and in its abilities to lead (Deeb 2006). The question remains, however: who decided that Hezbollah should enter the Lebanese political arena? In particular, was it the work of Iran and Syria, or was it the will of the group’s new Secretary-General?

A. Hypothesis 1: Leader’s Calculations of Strategy

With the end of the civil war in 1989, Syria had provided Hezbollah with cover for its continued armament, despite the terms of the Ta’if agreement ordering such militias be disarmed. In that sense, the group could continue with its strategy of armed resistance in realizing its objective to fight Israel’s presence in southern Lebanon. With regard to its goal of installing an Islamic state in Lebanon, however, Syria’s presence required that it

⁸ A number of prominent group leaders did suggest, however, that members of the party had a divine mandate to support Hezbollah with their votes (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 102).

reconsider its means for achieving this objective. Hezbollah's new Secretary-General had one solution: instead of striving toward an Islamic revolution parallel to that of Iran, the group could use the Lebanese political system to pursue Islamist policies.

The concept of integrating into the political system was not a new idea for Nasrallah, as he had been advocating such a course since the end of the civil war, before he had been chosen for the Secretary-General position (Hamzeh 2004, 110). Following the leadership's split over where to take the organization after Ta'if, it was Nasrallah's "two-way street" approach that had triumphed over Tufayli's "one-way street" formula that focused exclusively on armed resistance (111). Therefore, where Tufayli had failed to direct the group according to his preferences and strategies, Nasrallah was able to succeed. For Hassan Nasrallah, participating in the 1992 elections would have two main advantages: first, the organization could pursue its Islamist policies through the national legislature, and second, through representing the Shi'a community, the Party of God could further its objective of providing a voice for this long-oppressed segment of the Lebanese population.

Nasrallah has repeatedly voiced his assessment that "the conditions for establishing a state based on Islamic rule will probably never exist in Lebanon," at least while Syria's influence was strong and while the power-sharing structure required cross-confessional cooperation (Norton, "Domestic" 2007, 489). Having accepted the reality that Islamic revolution was not in the works, however, Nasrallah saw that Islamic policies could be implemented following "a model of participation in elections" rather than the model of revolution used in Iran (Hamzeh 1993, 325). True to this calculation, Hezbollah "did not give up on its Islamic agenda when it entered parliament" (Early 2006), though most of its

supporters continue to cast their votes for the party for its stances on issues, not because they wish to encourage the establishment of an Islamist state (Deeb 2006).

Hezbollah was born out of Lebanon's Shi'a community as an outlet for voicing the sect's demands and concerns that had long been ignored. Accordingly, Nasrallah had a second strategy for running candidates for office: representing the needs of this population in the national legislature. The Shi'a community had long demanded such a voice in the Lebanese system, and indeed there was strong social pressure at the time for Shi'a politicians to step forth, making Nasrallah's announcement in July 1992 all the more welcome to the Shi'a public (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 53–54). Further, the Secretary-General knew that the confessional arrangements despised so much by Hezbollah and the Shi'a community could only be fought from inside the system (Hamzeh 1993, 324–25). Accordingly, Nasrallah calculated that running candidates for office would provide opportunities for furthering its objective of crippling confessionalism.

Finally, as Nasrallah has always declared that Hezbollah's political efforts are subservient to its armed resistance against Israel, he knew in running in the 1992 elections that political participation would allow the group a forum for furthering the group's resistance efforts (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 16). With party members in the national legislature, Hezbollah would be able to voice its concerns over Israel's presence and activities in southern Lebanon, and it could potentially find support from the government or other organizations for its resistance efforts.

Nasrallah's approach to the Lebanese system varied greatly in contrast to the group's founding principles and even some of its most prominent figures. In its formative years, the group denounced and despised the Lebanese electoral system (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 99).

When one individual leader, Tufayli, tried to perpetuate this belief in the post-Ta'if world, however, he was unable to do so, and he was eventually removed from his position (Hamzeh 2004, 110–11). Tufayli was replaced briefly by Musawi and finally by Nasrallah, both of whom espoused the view that Hezbollah should redefine itself after the end of the civil war.

B. Hypothesis 2: Leader's Shaping of the Group Internally

As the analysis in the previous case suggested, Hassan Nasrallah had thought that Hezbollah should enter Lebanese politics long before his appointment to Secretary-General position. In the aftermath of the civil war, as Hezbollah was confronted with new realities brought by the Ta'if Agreement, Nasrallah and Musawi had led the charge for expanding the group's mandate beyond armed conflict to include political activity (Hamzeh 2004, 110–11). In accepting the terms of Ta'if under the direction of Syria and Iran, Hezbollah and its leaders necessarily had to accept that an Islamic revolution would not be arriving in Lebanon anytime soon, particularly during Syria's guardianship of the country (Early 2006). Nasrallah has expressed this very idea numerous times, implying that “the conditions for establishing a state based on Islamic rule will probably never exist in Lebanon, since such a state could only be established on the basis of broad consent, which is highly unlikely” (Norton, “Domestic” 2007).

Nonetheless, as discussed under the previous hypothesis, the group could attempt to use the legislature as a venue for pushing the Islamist agenda, even if all-out revolution did not occur. In that sense, Nasrallah led the charge in transforming the group's internal character from that of a “revolutionary ‘total refusal’ anti-system party” into that of a “‘protest’ anti-system party” (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 26–27). The group did not, therefore,

abandon its Islamist state objective completely, but it did redefine itself as a piece of the existing Lebanese political scene, and Nasrallah knew this was key to the group's survival.

Nasrallah had another consideration in expanding the group's mandate from solely armed struggle to include political involvement: the need for the group to survive after Israel's withdrawal (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 53). While Syria had ensured Hezbollah's survival after Ta'if by casting it as a "resistance group" against Israel rather than a militia, this mandate would last only as long as the Israeli occupation lasted. If Israel were to leave, which it eventually did, the Party of God would be without a mission. Accordingly, while Nasrallah maintained that the resistance would always take precedence over the group's political activities (115–16), his ushering of Hezbollah into the Lebanese political arena was a calculated move for strengthening the domestic legitimacy of the organization and thereby providing a secondary space for the group to act in case its resistance claims would vanish in the face of an Israeli withdrawal. The Hezbollah chief indeed accomplished this goal, as the group is now a full-fledged political party in the Lebanese legislature.

Tufayli disagreed strongly with Nasrallah's decision to redefine the internal character of the organization. Rather than support Hezbollah in the elections, the former Secretary-General encouraged followers in his hometown to burn ballot boxes in protest (Hamzeh 1993, 325). Tufayli, a prominent face of the organization from the beginning, claimed that Nasrallah had "sold out" in transforming the organization, and he eventually pulled himself away from the party's leadership (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 47). While Tufayli failed in casting his personal preferences for the future onto the group, Nasrallah had succeeded.

C. Hypothesis 3: Leader's Personal Quest for Power and Prestige

At the time of the 1992 elections and Hezbollah's decision to participate, Hassan Nasrallah had been in command of the group for only a few short months. Accordingly, the literature provides for very little discussion of any attempt by Nasrallah to increase his power and prestige through running candidates in the election. Nasrallah himself was not seeking any position of power, and his relatively low public recognition at the time did not provide much of a foundation on which to build his standing in local, regional, or international circles. Further, as discussed above, Nasrallah had long been a supporter of integrating the party into the Lebanese political arena. His decision, therefore, to run candidates in 1992 was consistent with his vision for the organization that he adopted years before his appointment to a position of power. Finally, at this point in time, Nasrallah could not have possibly known the potential for stardom that the Secretary-General of Hezbollah could achieve. Only later would he witness how popular the leader of a resistance movement could become in the nation and the region.

D. Hypothesis 4: External Forces Driving Behavior

Iran and Syria both had roles in Hezbollah's transformation into a political entity. Iran had helped lay the groundwork for the organization's participation in Lebanese elections through its hand in reshaping the organization at the end of the Lebanese civil war. Indeed, when the Hezbollah leadership approached the Grand Ayatollah in early 1989 about the organization's future, it approached him with two distinct paths. Tufayli advocated a hard-line approach that would maintain the group's militant nature, while Nasrallah and Musawi argued for a future that continued the armed resistance yet also worked politically to further the group's objectives and interests (Hamzeh 2004, 110). Khamenei sided with the

Nasrallah/Musawi approach and eventually pushed Tufayli from his leadership position. In doing so, Iran had helped to lay the foundation for Hezbollah's post-war future, which resulted in Nasrallah's appointment in 1992. Nasrallah consulted Iran before making the decision to run candidates in the general election and secured the support of Khamenei (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 100); however, the fact that ten of the twelve members of the ruling council of Hezbollah supported the decision brings the true effect of the Ayatollah's blessing into question (Norton, "Domestic" 2007, 480–81). Still, Iran likely saw Nasrallah's plan for using the system to bring about Islamist policies, which was still its ambition in Lebanon, having accepted that Syria would prevent revolution of the Iranian fashion during its guardianship of the country (Simon & Stevenson 2001, 35; Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 52).

Syria's role in the 1992 elections, given its position in Lebanon, was much more evident on the ground but was more focused on the election itself rather than Hezbollah's decision to participate. Following Ta'if, Syria feared a strong Hezbollah and arranged with the group to protect it from international scrutiny for remaining armed if it would avoid heavy involvement in Lebanon domestically (El-Hokayem 2007, 40). Still needing Hezbollah as a negotiating tool for Israel and in light of public support for the group's political integration, Syria found ways to assert its control over the electoral process without confronting the Party of God: Damascus could use its influence to draw district lines and to fashion the candidate lists (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 98). In doing so, Syria could break up strongholds of opposition to the Syrian presence in Lebanon, and it was able to select lists of candidates who were pro-Syrian. These efforts proved successful and became a pattern for future elections. Accordingly, one commentator concluded that post-war elections in

Lebanon were not truly free until those held after Syria's exit in April 2005 (Harris 2007, 37–38).

The direct effect of Syria's electoral manipulations on Hezbollah was that it forged the group's electoral alliances. Most significantly, it coerced the Party of God into running on the same list as its rival Amal, rather than its own, thus putting in place the "Syrian ceiling" on Hezbollah's potential electoral success (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 54). While not his idea, Nasrallah turned and used this arrangement as a strategy for furthering the group's objectives. Running with Amal would decrease the risk of renewed inter-confessional conflict, which would prevent the group from being distracted from its resistance campaigns against Israel (115–16). Thus, while Syria took control of Hezbollah's candidate lists and alliances, Nasrallah accepted the terms and used them to further his own objectives for the organization. As Saad-Ghorayeb assesses, "Hizbu'llah sacrificed its political independence and integrity, and perhaps even its political size, for the sake of preserving its resistance to the Israeli occupation. Thus, there is much truth in Nasru'llah's claim that, rather than subordinate its resistance to political activity, Hizbu'llah's political activity serves its resistance" (116).

X. WAR WITH ISRAEL (2006)

In the spring of 2000, Israel withdrew its forces from southern Lebanon after eighteen years of military occupation. As Secretary-General of the resistance movement battling Israel, Nasrallah was widely credited throughout Lebanon and the broader Arab world with successfully driving away the occupying forces, and as a result, his standing as a leader grew significantly (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 116). Following the Israeli exit, however, Hezbollah required a renewed justification for continuing its armed resistance against Lebanon's southerly neighbor (Harris 2007, 47). At the same time, Syria could not afford to lose its leverage against Israel in negotiating for the return of the long-occupied Golan Heights (Norton, "Domestic" 2007, 479). As a result, Hezbollah and Syria together fashioned an argument that the Israeli exit had not been total, as Israel continued to occupy a small area known as the Shebaa Farms. While Israel and the United Nations claimed that the Farms were part of the Golan Heights, the land itself was Lebanese-owned, prompting Syria and Hezbollah to argue that the land was rightfully part of Lebanon (Early 2006). Accordingly, the Party of God continued its armed resistance against Israel in the years following its purported exit from southern Lebanon.

On July 12, 2006, in furtherance of Hezbollah's objective to drive out Israel from Lebanese lands, Secretary-General Nasrallah ordered the capture of five Israeli soldiers along the border of Lebanon and Israel (Associated Press 2006). In the course of the raid, three of the soldiers were killed, and two were taken prisoner. The world watched in amazement as the state of Israel responded to the kidnapping with a massive land, sea, and air campaign against Hezbollah and Lebanon. The Israeli military hit roads, ports, airports, gasoline stations, communication towers, factories, and trucks carrying military and civilian cargos

(Deeb 2006). The Party of God stood its ground, however—primarily with Iranian- and Syrian-made rockets—in a conflict that lasted thirty-four days, ending on August 14 with a cease-fire agreement.

While public opinion throughout the region and international community at first criticized Hezbollah for the conducting the kidnapping and thereby triggering the conflict, the disproportionate response by the Israeli military quickly turned the tide and produced sympathy for Hezbollah and the people of Lebanon (Salem 2006, 17). The summer war proved to be the costliest Arab-Israeli conflict to date: damages in Lebanon were estimated at over seven billion dollars, approximately 1200 civilians lost their lives, nearly 15,000 Lebanese homes were destroyed, and one fourth of the country's population was displaced as a result of the fighting (Salem 2006, 18; Norton, "Domestic" 2007, 485). Still, Hezbollah, and Nasrallah in particular, emerged from the conflict stronger and more popular than at any other time in its history.

In the aftermath of the 2006 war, publications on the Party of God and on Nasrallah flourished as scholars sought to feed demand on information about the group and its leader. While news reports and some scholars held to the theory that Hezbollah was acting as a mere proxy of Iran and Syria, other scholars, discussed previously, released work that questioned this assumption. This case study synthesizes the records and assessments of the conflict and thereby seeks to discover the driving force behind the kidnappings and the resulting conflict.

A. Hypothesis 1: Leader's Calculations of Strategy

While the events of 2006 presented minimal opportunities for furthering objectives of Islamist governance or of increasing the political voice of the Lebanese Shi'a, they did allow Nasrallah to strategize over Hezbollah's armed resistance against Israel. As the introduction

to this case discussed, the Party of God faced calls to disarm after the withdrawal of Israel in 2000. In the midst of the Syrian withdrawal of 2005, these calls were renewed (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 132). Nasrallah brushed aside these calls, proclaiming that Hezbollah was the only “credible force” for defending the Lebanese people against their neighbor to the south.

The public response to Nasrallah’s argument was not particularly warm. Opinion polls conducted in early 2006 revealed that a majority of the Lebanese population wanted official government forces to have a monopoly on the use of force (Harris 2007, 50–51). The supposed folly of Hezbollah’s continued armament became a popular subject in the press, and it even provided material for a Lebanese comedy skit (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 117, 133). During this same time, “national dialogues,” attended by Nasrallah and other Hezbollah leaders, were held with Lebanese officials to lay out terms for disarming the organization, Nasrallah all the while maintaining that the constant Israeli threat required the party to maintain its military wing (Deeb 2006). In light of all of this pressure and criticism, Hezbollah not only sought to continue its resistance against Israel, but it also needed to “demonstrate its continuing relevance as a bulwark against Israeli aggression” (Aslan 2006, 37).

In a television interview following the thirty-four day conflict, Nasrallah was asked if he would have ordered the kidnapping of the Israeli soldiers on July 12 if he had known that war would follow (Associated Press 2006). He replied to al-Jazeera, “We did not think, even one percent, that the capture would lead to a war at this time and of this magnitude. You ask me, if I had known on July 11 . . . that the operation would lead to such a war, would I do it? I say no, absolutely not.” Hassan Nasrallah, however, is not a man to miscalculate.

In the months preceding the summer 2006 war, Israel and Hezbollah had been engaging in cross-border conflicts with increasing intensity (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 134–35). Therefore, he knew that Israel was ready for a fight, and it had already demonstrated its willingness to respond with excessive force. In addition, the location that Nasrallah chose for the kidnapping was particularly daring: while most of Hezbollah’s contacts with Israel had been in the Shebaa Farms area, the July 2006 raid took place outside of the allegedly occupied land (Harris 2007, 38). With these considerations, Professor William Harris concludes:

When it crossed Lebanon’s border with Israel to kidnap Israeli soldiers, Hezbollah presumably calculated a response that would truncate Lebanese criticism of “resistance” weapons . . . and refocus world attention on Lebanon’s problems with Israel To suppose that Hezbollah did not calculate a major reaction to an unprecedented infraction in the Galilee, far from the disputed Shebaa farms on the Golan Heights, is laughable.

Certainly there is reason to believe that Nasrallah instigated the kidnappings and dove into the conflict knowing full well that war would ensue that would justify Hezbollah’s continued armament. Further supporting of this assessment is a speech given by the Secretary-General in the midst of the conflict that boldly declared Hezbollah “had entered battle on behalf of the whole *umma* (Arab and Islamic community), and that damage along the way was of small account.” Immediately following the conflict, Nasrallah announced a ““strategic, historic victory”” for the Party of God and “boldly declared that Hezbollah had achieved its goals” (Fielder 2006).

The response to Hezbollah’s endurance in the face of Israel was overwhelming. Nasrallah had forced Israel’s retreat, an accomplishment that no Arab state could even claim, let alone a resistance group (Wright 2006). Not surprisingly, opinion polls conducted in Lebanon after the conflict revealed higher support for the group’s remaining armed (Harris

2007, 54). Through the kidnapping and ongoing violence of the summer of 2006, Nasrallah showed the people of Lebanon and of the world that the organization's task of resisting Israel was not complete. He had stood up in the face of Hezbollah's enemy and reminded his compatriots that the group was needed to effectively protect them from the Israeli threat.

B. Hypothesis 2: Leader's Shaping of the Group Internally

Having set Hezbollah down a path of internal reform with his first major decision to run candidates in the 1992 elections, Nasrallah used the 2006 conflict to continue the group's evolution as a political actor in Lebanon. While reminding Lebanon and the world of the group's external threat found in Israel, the Hezbollah Secretary-General had been working to shape the group's character as a distinct Lebanese political actor and ensure its relevance and standing within Lebanon's political sphere.

Following the exit of Syria in 2005, Hezbollah lost its primary source of international cover for its continued armament (El-Hokayem 2007, 45). The organization therefore sought and obtained the Lebanese cabinet's blessing on its ongoing resistance efforts. This official support, however, did not save Hezbollah from increasing criticism over its military activities; editorials lashed at the organization and its leader, accusing Hezbollah of endangering Lebanon and of remaining armed without justification (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 117–18, 133). The resulting erosion of Hezbollah's reputation and popularity in Lebanon constituted a threat to its electoral potential and thus required Nasrallah to enhance its Lebanese credentials.

Since Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri's assassination and the subsequent withdrawal of Syria in 2005, Iran had been trying to take Syria's place on the ground in Lebanon, particularly with regard to Hezbollah (Salem 2006, 16). In doing so, part of its agenda was

“to infuse the Lebanese Shi‘a with a pan-Shi‘i identity centered on Iran” (Deeb 2006). These efforts proved fruitless, however, because during the same period, the Hezbollah leadership had been increasing its nationalist rhetoric in order to remind the public of its ties to the land and people of Arab Lebanon. This rhetoric continued into the war, demonstrating Nasrallah’s intent to bolster the group’s Lebanese credentials with patriotism and a “rally around the flag” mentality. For instance, in an interview midway through the war with Israel, Nasrallah denied informing Syria and Iran of the kidnapping plan, reminding al-Jazeera viewers that the “resistance group operate[s] on Lebanese soil” (Moubayed 2006).

Following the conflict, the cause of the increased nationalist talk became apparent, if it was not already—Nasrallah was seeking to increase Hezbollah’s power within the Lebanese government. Soon after showing the world the organization’s power, Nasrallah demanded a national unity government that would provide the Party of a God with a veto power in governing the nation (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 154–55). He even threatened to use his renewed popularity to stir protests and demonstrations if the group’s calls were not honored (155–56). Hezbollah’s inclusion in a unity government would not only allow the group to protect its weapons and to more effectively pursue all of its other policies, but it would also help to solidify the group as an indispensable political entity in Lebanon. Nasrallah’s offer shortly after the summer war to expand the resistance fold to non-Shi‘a groups further demonstrates the leader’s desire “to polish [Hezbollah’s] Lebanese credentials” and to transform the organization into an even stronger and more appealing political institution (El-Hokayem 2007, 49).

C. Hypothesis 3: Leader's Personal Quest for Power and Prestige

By 2006, Hassan Nasrallah was a familiar face throughout Lebanon and the broader Middle East. Most notably, he had been credited with—and subsequently praised for—forcing Israel to retreat from southern Lebanon in 2000, and he was similarly lauded in 2004 for successfully negotiating a prisoner exchange with Israel in which Hezbollah turned over three bodies of Israeli soldiers in exchange for the release of 423 Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 116).

In the time preceding the 2006 summer war, however, his popularity, like that of Hezbollah, had begun to wane. Many had begun to question the organization's continued military resistance campaigns against Israel, particularly after all foreign forces had withdrawn, and a majority of Lebanese citizens desired that the official Lebanese military would have a monopoly on the capacity to use force (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 117; Harris 2007, 50–51). On a more personal level, the publisher of the nation's most popular newspaper and a well-respected editorialist, Gibran Tueni, accused Nasrallah of leading Hezbollah recklessly and argued that the Lebanese people were unjustly suffering for it (117–18). Even worse for Nasrallah, as Norton wrote, “Tueni was only one of many who accused Nasrallah of being intoxicated with his own fame” (118). Criticism of the Hezbollah leader extended even to mockery: for instance, a Lebanese television program ran a satirical skit with a Nasrallah-looking figure offering ridiculous but comical reasons for Hezbollah's need to maintain its military capacity (133).

In light of all of this ridicule, Nasrallah had reason to want to boost his image and restore his prestige. Norton (Hezbollah 2007), discussing the aftermath of the comedy skit, reports that “Nasrallah, for his part, did not hide his pique. The incident whetted Hezbollah's

appetite for a dramatic coup de théâtre directed at its arch enemy that would allow the organization to reclaim its honor and make its militia appear all the more essential” (133).

The kidnapping of the Israeli soldiers and the instigation of conflict with Israel provided such an event.

Just days after the conflict ended, Nasrallah claimed that he would not have ordered the kidnappings had he known it would trigger the war (Associated Press 2006). Other evidence, however, suggests that Nasrallah knew precisely how Israel would respond, particularly after months of escalating exchanges and considering that Nasrallah ordered the attack outside of the Shebaa Farms region where raids had become the norm (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 134–35; Harris 2007, 38).

From the outset of the conflict and through its end, Hassan Nasrallah gave a flawless performance as a bold and steadfast leader. In fact, there was an impression on the ground in Lebanon that Nasrallah appeared much more like a leader of a nation than the Secretary-General of a political organization (Staten 2008, 41). As Harris (2007) reports, “Nasrallah made speeches from hiding places, impressing the Lebanese with preplanned responses to Israeli escalation” (52), and in a clear attempt at uniting people behind his leadership, he “indicated in a wartime speech that the party had entered battle on behalf of the whole *umma* (Arab and Islamic community)” (38). His most powerful display occurred during a televised speech during which he declared the group’s readiness for fighting war with Israel; moments after Nasrallah’s daring declaration, as if on cue, Hezbollah shocked everyone by striking an Israeli ship off the Lebanese coast (Norton, Hezbollah 2007, 136).

In evaluating Nasrallah’s standing after the war, one observer noted, “Although much of Lebanon lies in ruins, Nasrallah has emerged a winner” (Fielder 2006). Indeed, the

Hezbollah leader had repaired his honor and reputation in the course of the thirty-four-day conflict. His image quickly appeared on posters, bumper stickers, billboards, key rings, and other items throughout the Arab world, and his “fan base” expanded well beyond the Shi‘a community, although he even inspired numerous Sunni Muslims to enter the Shi‘a fold (Knickmeyer 2006, Fielder 2006). Nasrallah was able to proclaim a divine victory in the conflict, as he became the first Arab leader to make Israel retreat from battle without having been victorious (Salem 2006, 18; Wright 2006). As Reza Aslan (2006) has stated, “Nasrallah could not have scripted events any better” (31). The Secretary-General’s popularity had certainly reached new heights.

D. Hypothesis 4: External Forces Driving Behavior

In a 2007 article on recent events in Lebanon and challenges for the future, Harris wrote, “When Nasrallah decided to make a kidnapping raid into Israel on 12 July 2006, it can be assumed that he coordinated with Damascus and Tehran” (51). This assumption, however, is based upon an adherence to the proxy theory and stands in contrast to the record available regarding the war and the political circumstances surrounding it. In the course of a wartime interview, the Secretary-General told al-Jazeera that he had not even share his hostage plan with Damascus or Tehran: “I had not informed the Lebanese government, but neither had I informed my closest allies. Syria and Iran had not been informed. No Syria or Iran person had had any prior information. They had not been informed, and I had not consulted any one of them” (Moubayed 2006). While such assertions cannot always be taken at face value, the evidence suggests that the statement was true with regard to both parties.

While Iran had increased its attention on Hezbollah prior to the conflict, due largely to Syria’s precarious position in Lebanon after Prime Minister Hariri’s death, Nasrallah may

have avoided contacting Iran about his plans for fear that it would not approve of their timing (Salem 2006, 13, 16). Iran has continued, since Hezbollah's founding in the early 1980s, to supply Nasrallah's organization with money, weapons, and other items of support to the tune of \$100 million annually (Wright 2006), which it certainly sees as an investment for its own potential political gains. Such an expectation is perfectly logical: considering the high level of connectivity between Hezbollah and Tehran claimed by Western politicians and media outlets, the Islamic republic stands to benefit from any successes of the resistance group (Salem 2006, 13). In the summer of 2006, however, Iran did not appear ready to "cash in" its investment, and the idea of a sustained war between Hezbollah and Israel would have likely worried Tehran about the future readiness of the resistance group to help advance its interests.

Indeed, following the conflict, as Salem (2006) concluded in his assessment, "this war wasted much of the deterrent power that it had rested in Hezbollah for its own hour of need" (13). Iran, therefore, would not have ordered Nasrallah to trigger a conflict, and its leaders would have tried to dissuade Nasrallah had it known of the plans. Accordingly, the Hezbollah leader's desire to contact Iranian leadership would have been minimal. There were even signs of Tehran's displeasure with the conflict following its conclusion; for instance, when Iran pledged aid for rebuilding Lebanon after the war, it vowed to channel the support through the Western-friendly government rather than its supposed proxy (20). There is also evidence that Iran may have been frustrated with Hezbollah's increasing tendency to sell itself as a uniquely Lebanese group, which was inherently clashing with Iran's hopes that the organization would adopt a pronounced pan-Shi'a image and ideology (Deeb 2006).

The possibility that Syria ordered the kidnappings and instigation for war in the summer of 2006 is even less likely, due significantly to Syria's weak position in Lebanon and elsewhere. Though Bashar al-Asad, who took command of Syria following his father's death in 2000, consistently provides encouragement for Hezbollah's armed resistance against Israel—still to raise Syria's negotiating power over the Golan Heights (Simon & Stevenson 2001, 37)—he is in no position today to dictate the organization's activities. In fact, as El-Hokayem (2007) recently stated, "Rather than Hizballah deriving great benefits from Syria's support, Syria now reap[s] more benefits from its association with Hizballah" (43). While the elder Asad worked with the Party of God in secret, his successor has been forced to publicize his relationship with Nasrallah for the sake of his own legitimacy (42–43). The Syrian leader increasingly uses the rhetoric of the Hezbollah Secretary-General in his speeches, and the state apparatus perpetuating Asad's cult of personality places Bashar's image alongside those of Nasrallah and the elder Asad.

Following the 2006 conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, Damascus was relatively quiet (Moubayed 2006). The state-controlled media, however, ran pieces in support of Nasrallah, and his image became ubiquitous in the Syrian streets as Syria celebrated its association with the Lebanese group. In contrast, Hezbollah supporters appeared to care very little about Syria's support for their Secretary-General and their organization (El-Hokayem 2007, 44). This reflects the larger reality that Syria's standing in Lebanon has diminished. In addition to relying on Hezbollah in its negotiations with Israel, Syria has hopes that Hezbollah will hinder or destroy efforts to establish a tribunal to investigate the Hariri assassination (46). Damascus, therefore, depends heavily on Hezbollah's continued success, but it cannot wield the influence to dictate how that success should be achieved or how the

group should evolve internally. Accordingly, Nasrallah's declaration that Syria neither dictated—nor even knew about—the decision is consistent with the realities of today's Syria-Hezbollah relationship.

XI. ANALYSIS

A. Summary of Cases

After considering these four key events and eras in Hezbollah's history, it is possible to synthesize the historical record regarding the group's behavior and influences and thereby evaluate the explanatory power of each of my four hypotheses. Figure 1, at the end of this section, provides a visual summary of the explanatory power of the hypotheses.

To begin, the Hezbollah of the early 1980s is not well explained by the hypotheses related to the role of individual leaders in explaining the group's behavior. This is due most obviously to the lack of an identifiable individual who could actually direct the group's activities at this point in time. A coherent power structure did not develop until the late 1980s, and the first Secretary-General was not appointed until 1989. While Tufayli, Musawi, Nasrallah, Fadlallah, and others were all prominent individuals in Hezbollah's early years, none were in a position of power that would facilitate directing the group's activities. Accordingly, I cannot conclude that the group's early actions and ideals were the product of an individual leader's calculations for achieving objectives, shaping the organization internally, or bolstering personal power and prestige.

Instead, the historical record of Hezbollah's founding supports the premise that the group was established as a proxy for Syrian and Iranian interests, particularly the latter. Hezbollah depended on Iran for support and training to even begin operating, allowing the Islamic Republic to exert significant influence in the formation of the group's objectives and internal character. As the analysis outlined, Iran had high hopes for spreading its revolutionary fire and for challenging Israel at its own doorstep, and Hezbollah provided a venue for realizing these objectives. While Syria's support of the Party of God was slow and

measured, it still made possible the group's rise by facilitating Iran's efforts. Given the string of events and the trails of assistance and guidance surrounding Hezbollah's founding, it is clear why the proxy theory developed to describe the organization. I therefore assign an explanatory power label of "weak" to hypotheses one, two, and three in Figure 1 and a label of "strong" to the fourth hypothesis.

An analysis of the years surrounding the end of the Lebanese civil war produces similar results in the effectiveness of my four hypotheses. A leadership structure had evolved by the end of the war, but it had not been in place long, as Tufayli was appointed Secretary-General in its final months. When an important post-war decision arose—selecting a future path for the Party of God—the Secretary-General took a stand that was rejected by the Iranian leadership, and he was removed from the position following his two-year term. Accordingly, Tufayli was unable to carry out his personal preferences for realizing the group's objectives and shaping its internal character—his plans fell to those of Iran and Syria. At the same time, there was no real opportunity for Tufayli to act in pursuit of personal glory: he had no foundation on which to build prestige, and his early disagreement with Khamenei left him without the ability to build power during the bulk of his term.

In this second case, Iran provided direction for the Party of God, but it was Syria that made possible the group's continued resistance operations. Having secured control on the ground in Lebanon, Syria was in a position to define Hezbollah's post-war role as an agent of armed resistance against Israel and to protect it from the provisions of Ta'if that called for its disarmament. In response, Hezbollah had little choice but to follow Syria's plan for its future, a plan that relied upon the group as a powerful negotiating tool but simultaneously sought to contain its Islamist ambitions. Again, the proxy theory holds true for this time

period: Syria and Iran had strategic interests in the Party of God, and no individual leader was able to direct the group along his own path. Accordingly, I assign a “weak” explanatory value status to the individual-level hypotheses and a “strong” value to the fourth hypothesis.

The third case in this study, the time surrounding the 1992 Lebanese General Elections, is the first time period in which Hassan Nasrallah, the real inspiration for adapting the Great Men Theory, was in command of Hezbollah. My analysis for this era of the group’s history reveals a stronger role for an individual leader in directing the actions of the organization. Faced with the reality that Syria had effective control of the political scene in much of Lebanon, Nasrallah knew that an Iranian-style Islamic revolution would not occur in the near future. Accordingly, he saw the 1992 general elections as a means for bringing about Islamist policies in Lebanon and fighting the confessional system. If Party of God candidates could win seats in the Chamber of Deputies, they could work within the system and forge a new model of Islamic revolution. In that sense, Nasrallah’s strategy for realizing the group’s objectives is evident in the decision to run candidates. I therefore assign a “strong” explanatory power label to the first hypothesis for this time period.

At the same time, Nasrallah calculated that Hezbollah should expand the scope of its organization beyond that of an armed resistance group if it hoped to survive past an eventual Israeli withdrawal. The 1992 elections provided the Secretary-General with the opportunity to make a decision that would force the internal structure and nature of the organization to change, and Nasrallah took full advantage of this opportunity. Having supported political integration since the final years of the civil war, Nasrallah’s position finally allowed him to lead the group in this direction. By thrusting the Party of God into the electoral sphere, Nasrallah successfully began the transformation of Hezbollah from a militia with affiliated

social services to the state-like entity that it is today. Because this individual leader's decision to run candidates was a direct attempt at molding the organization internally, I affix a "strong" explanatory power label to the second hypothesis within this third case.

When Nasrallah took command of Hezbollah, there was no precedent that suggested broader power and prestige would be available with the position. Nasrallah, therefore, could not have entered the role expecting to earn "fame and fortune," particularly with his first major decision. Nor was Nasrallah expecting personal benefits in the party running candidates, as he himself would not be seeking any position in the Lebanese government. Accordingly, there is nothing in the historical record to suggest that Nasrallah chose to run candidates for his own glory, and I therefore assign a "weak" explanatory value to hypothesis number three.

The roles of Syria and Iran appear to be significantly lower in the decision to run candidates in the 1992 elections than in the previous cases. Still, the Grand Ayatollah granted his blessing on the group's participation, and the Hezbollah leadership's meeting in Tehran in early 1989 had set the organization on a path toward expanding beyond armed resistance. At the same time, Hezbollah's political participation required at least the tolerance of Syria, and in the end, Syria took control of the electoral districts and lists. Because the influence of Iran and Syria in the 1992 decision was indirect yet still formative, I apply a label of "moderate" to the explanatory power of the fourth hypothesis in this case.

The final case included in this study is the era surrounding the summer 2006 war between Hezbollah and the state of Israel. Again, my analysis reveals a strong role for Nasrallah in determining Hezbollah's behavior, and it thereby offers a strong challenge to the proxy theory as a valid explanation of the group's behavior today. In ordering the

kidnapping of the Israeli soldiers and waging a war against Israel, Nasrallah was playing out his strategy for resisting the group's enemy and reminding the public of the threat Israel posed to Lebanon. Contrary to Nasrallah's rhetoric, there is strong evidence to suggest that he initiated the conflict with the expectation that Israel would respond just as it did, generating sympathy for Hezbollah and swaying public opinion toward acceptance of the group's continued armament. Accordingly, I apply a "strong" explanatory power label to the first hypothesis in this final case.

While using the conflict to further Hezbollah's objectives toward Israel, Nasrallah was also continuing his campaign to shape the group's internal character. Having demonstrated renewed interest in being part of the national power hierarchy months before the war, and in the face of increased criticism of the organization and its military activities, Nasrallah drew Israel into war in part to regain the group's honor and demonstrate its power. Hezbollah's display of might served to remind the Lebanese public of its legitimacy as an important political actor, and it allowed it to credibly seek more political power in the Lebanese system. All the while, Nasrallah weaved Lebanese nationalism into the fabric of the organization in order to strengthen it on the Lebanese front and remind the people of Lebanon of their shared interests. In light of Nasrallah's use of the events surrounding the 2006 war to bolster the political credentials and competency of the Party of God, I affix an explanatory power label of "strong" to the second hypothesis.

For the first time in this study, there is evidence of an individual leader's quest for power and prestige driving the group's behavior. Having achieved "superstar" status following the withdrawal of Israel in 2000 and the prisoner exchange in 2004, Nasrallah's stardom was beginning to fade prior to the summer 2006 war. Thus, the Hezbollah

Secretary-General had motivation to improve his image in Lebanon and thereby restore his prestige. By ordering the capture of the Israeli soldiers and sparking war with Israel, Nasrallah gave himself an opportunity to shine. And shine he did. The Secretary-General handled the conflict flawlessly and emerged as a hero, not only in Lebanon but throughout the Arab world. Due to the strong evidence of a motive to raise his profile and the calculated conduct of the events surrounding the war, I apply a “strong” explanatory power label to the third hypothesis.

Finally, analysis of hypothesis four in the context of the 2006 war reveals that Iran and Syria today had very little to say in the decision to kidnap the soldiers and engage in conflict. While both states continue to provide weaponry and other technical and financial assistance to Hezbollah, it is Nasrallah who appears to drive the organization’s behavior. Syria is now comparatively weak vis-à-vis the Party of God, and Iran would have likely waited to demonstrate the group’s power in a time in which its need for political gains was more urgent. It is, therefore, believable that Nasrallah devised the kidnapping scheme on his own and did not inform these two allies prior to initiating his plan. For these reasons, I conclude that the explanatory power of the fourth hypothesis is “weak” for this final case. Figure 1, below, provides a visual illustration of this entire discussion.

B. Conclusions

A distinct pattern in explaining Hezbollah’s actions emerges from the four historical cases considered in this analysis. As Figure 1 illustrates, the role of individuals in directing the behavior of the Party of God has steadily increased since the group’s founding, whereas the role of external powers—i.e., Syria and Iran—has decreased significantly with the passage of time. While their fingerprints unquestionably remain on the organization, Reza

Aslan (2006) was extremely accurate when he asserted that “it would be a grave exaggeration to claim . . . that Hezbollah is merely a puppet of Syria and Iran” (31). While individual leaders appeared to matter very little in the founding years of the Party of God, the group now acts with a unique Nasrallah flair. At the same time, the abilities of Iran and—perhaps even more so—Syria to direct the group’s activities are at their lowest points in Hezbollah’s history, a reality yet to be recognized by the United States government, the mainstream media, and many others. This shift over time in the direction of Hezbollah’s activities carries with it many implications, a number of which are highlighted in the subsequent section.

Figure 1: Explanatory Power of H₁–H₄

	Founding of Hezbollah (1982–1985)	Ta’if Agreement (end of civil war) (1989)	Lebanese General Elections (1992)	Hezbollah-Israel War (2006)
H ₁ : Leader’s Calculations of Strategy	○	○	●	●
H ₂ : Leader’s Shaping of the Group Internally	○	○	●	●
H ₃ : Leader’s Personal Quest for Power/Prestige	○	○	○	●
H ₄ : External Forces (Iran and Syria)	●	●	◐	○

KEY: ○: weak ◐: moderate ●: strong

XII. IMPLICATIONS

A. Hezbollah and Lebanon

This study provides strong evidence that the proxy label consistently applied to Hezbollah, while once appropriate, is no longer valid. Rather, the personal preferences of Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah in directing the group's activities have become increasingly evident in the course the group has taken under his leadership. Accordingly, to predict the future actions of the organization, focus should be extended to the preferences and expressions of this individual leader, rather than rested exclusively on its purported puppeteers. Nasrallah has demonstrated a unique brand of pragmatism that works around all opposition while still furthering the group's objectives. As new conflicts arise, therefore, scholars and analysts should not look exclusively at the interests of Iran and Syria in calculating Hezbollah's options, but also toward those of the group itself. Politicians who continue to blindly attribute all of the activities of the group to Iran and Syria should be challenged on their use of rhetoric, meant arguably to blur the lines of Israeli and American interests, and they should be corrected so that the policies they create reflect the realities of the situation.

Under the leadership of Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah has evolved into a state-like entity of its own, while still increasing its power in the Lebanese government. Since 1992, the leader has directed the organization in ways that would solidify its presence in the Lebanese power structure and that would allow it to continue its armed resistance. Potential changes in regional circumstances could force Hezbollah to further redefine its character and objectives. For instance, if Israel and Syria were to sign a treaty resolving the Golan Heights—the two states are currently engaged in indirect talks in Turkey—among the terms

would certainly be a requirement that Syria end all forms of aid to Hezbollah. As a result, Nasrallah would be forced to adjust not only to the loss of an ally but to the loss of a land path to its other ally. This study certainly suggests that the leader would succeed in securing other funding. Nasrallah's ongoing efforts to integrate the organization into the Lebanese political landscape and increase its standing among the Lebanese people may well show his intention to secure state resources for the resistance.

Finally, the findings of this study reveal that Nasrallah's popularity should be tracked and any declines noted. The evidence surrounding the 2006 conflict with Israel suggests that Nasrallah may now be sensitive to his personal fame, which could provide him with a motivating factor in making decisions for the organization. Should his standing in Lebanon, or in the region for that matter, decline again, analysts should expect that he will act to restore it.

In way of a caveat, a rejection of the proxy theory does not mean that Iran and Syria, and their interests, be ignored all together. If for no other reason, they still supply Hezbollah with significant financial, technical, and military support, which Nasrallah would presumably prefer to receive in the future. To that extent, Nasrallah must operate within their rules to ensure their continued assistance. While Hezbollah's "path to independence," therefore, is not yet complete, Iran and Syria's declining influence on its objectives and day-to-day operations is apparent and important. Nevertheless, Iran and Syria still find their affiliation with Hezbollah worth their investment, encouraging Nasrallah to pursue his own objectives in ways that will intersect the interests of the organization's allies.

B. Iraq and Elsewhere

The entire story of Hezbollah is potentially important in Iraq, where sectarian groups are engaging in ongoing violence against each other and against U.S. occupying forces. Any number of these groups could emerge as the Iraqi Hezbollah and eventually constitute states within the state. That Iraq is bordered by Iran and Syria, who have had practice in raising and nurturing such groups, makes this likelihood even greater. There have even been reports of Hezbollah training groups in Iraq, which could mean that they will imitate the evolutionary path that Hezbollah has followed (Hendawi & Abdul-Zahra 2008).⁹ Observers should watch these organizations for potential “great men” that may emerge as powerful leaders who are able to command national and regional attention—and who are more pragmatic than ideological in their strategies. They may, after all, be the key to understanding the groups that they lead.

This analysis demonstrates how, and under which circumstances, such non-state actors can be treated like states and analyzed alongside recognized states. Accordingly, the model used in this thesis is also potentially useful for ongoing conflicts within African states, as the literature has suggested. Many of the militia and pseudo-state organization depend on outside support, sometimes from neighboring states, and strong personalities have emerged from their ranks to widespread fame and support among local ethnic groups or other populations. Therefore, there is potential to better understand some of these groups by examining their leaders and how they influence the actions taken by their organization.

⁹ It could also mean that Nasrallah is looking ahead, beyond the struggle with Israel that would presumably end after an exit from the Shebaa Farms, and gradually reviving Hezbollah’s founding objective to expel Western powers from the Arab world.

C. Non-State Actors in International Relations

Not all non-state actors are sufficiently state-like to be treated as states under various international relations theories. As the literature suggests, and as this study demonstrates, however, there are instances in which such an approach is possible and even desirable. The treatment of pseudo-states as officially recognized states is possible, in part, because non-state actors can face the concerns and conditions of anarchy in the same ways that states do. Therefore, because of their comparable situations, both types of international actors can be considered side-by-side in exploring patterns in global politics. In some instances, inclusion of both state and non-state actors is necessary for a reliable study, and a disregard for those non-state actors who look and behave like states will inevitably lead to skewed results. Finally, this study suggests that “great men” can not only lead states, but they can also lead non-state actors and still alter history and global politics in the same ways as state leaders. Thus, not only should the roles of individual leaders in the direction of states be explored, but the roles of individual leaders in the direction of non-state actors should also be considered.

D. Future Research

There is great potential for expanding this project, both with regard to Hezbollah and with regard to non-state actors generally. With regard to this specific study, one could consider more cases, particularly during the years 1992 to 2006. Although there were no major events during this time to alter the landscape with regard to Israel, Syria, and other key regional actors, analysis of this time period would still provide greater insights into Hezbollah’s internal evolution as a Lebanese political being. In addition, while this study was limited to English-language sources, the inclusion of sources in Arabic would provide for a richer understanding of Hezbollah during the eras addressed by this study. It would, in

particular, provide a broader information base for examining the dynamics of Hezbollah within Lebanon, as scholars and the international media have tended to produce the most literature on events that involved Syria, Israel, or other states. Finally, there are more hypotheses that could be tested on Nasrallah, many of which Byman and Pollack outline in their article. For instance, one could examine particular personality traits of the Secretary-General that influence his decisions, or one might investigate the internal Hezbollah power structure and how the leader interacts with it to wield power.

As the implications sections discuss, there are leaders of other non-state actors who could be analyzed using this model. There are a great number of separatist groups in Eurasia and Africa, and groups like FARC have long controlled territories within Latin American states. There are also individual leaders of sectarian groups in Iraq, such as Muqtada al-Sadr, who have emerged as prominent leaders and who therefore may be suitable for “great men” hypotheses. All of these non-state entities are important actors in their particular settings, and they should not be ignored by international relations scholars, as others have argued. Hypotheses regarding the role of individual leaders can be adapted and tested to investigate whether individuals matter in the decision-making processes of these groups, and in doing so, one may discover that there are other forces at work than popular conceptions would suggest. In determining which non-state actors are appropriate for the application of state theories, I have outlined several conditions; certainly these conditions should be further explored and potentially refined. Scholars can then broaden the body of research that treats non-state actors as states. There are other principles—balance of power, security dilemma, alliance-building, and so on—that could be applied to appropriate non-state entities, which would result in a better understanding of global politics.

XIII. CONCLUSION

On July 11, 2008, Lebanon announced the formation of a unity coalition that effectively gives Hezbollah and its allied parties a veto in Lebanese government. Hezbollah can be expected, therefore, to continue to play a major role in Lebanon and in the Levant more generally. At the same time, the organization's presence in Iraq and its contacts with groups in Palestine suggest that the group will be important in broader regional affairs. Accordingly, a solid understanding of Hezbollah and its behavior is critical to deciphering a number of events that unfold in the Middle East. This study has examined the forces that drive the organization's behavior, which is just one piece of the puzzle that is the Party of God.

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