A Deafening Silence:
Hizballah After the American Invasion of Iraq

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In 1983, the United States became intimately familiar with Hizballah and the ramifications of international terrorism. In April, a Hizballah member, using a previously unseen tactic, drove a truck laden with explosives into the American Embassy, killing sixty-one people. Then in October, in well-planned, simultaneous operations, suicide bombers using the same method struck the barracks complexes of American and French peacekeepers, killing two hundred forty-one American servicemen and twenty-three French soldiers. Further bombings, murders, and kidnappings greatly contributed to the American decision months later that the carnage and anarchy in Lebanon were not worth additional American lives.

While September 11th, 2001, opened the chapter of America's war on terrorism, President Bush's State of the Union address in January of the following year marked the Lebanese group, Hizballah, as one of the primary targets of future American attention. Although al Qaeda and its affiliates were responsible for the most recent attacks against United States interests, many government officials and terrorism experts rank Hizballah as the greatest threat to American interests and security, particularly interests in the Middle East. Why? Why is this group perceived as such a great and contemporary threat, particularly taking into consideration that it has not targeted Americans since the 1990's? Has Hizballah not altered its method and focus and become one of many legitimate political groups in Lebanon? With no recent anti-American actions, how can it be considered as great a threat as al Qaeda? Particularly in light of its low profile after the American invasion of Iraq, could not the United States' focus on this

Lebanese group simply be an antique resulting from former transgressions? What endows Hizballah with the ability to act as such a dangerous latent threat to the United States?

In order to begin to answer many of these questions, we must reacquaint ourselves with Hizballah- not only the organization's anti-American actions and rhetoric, but its history, maturation, and ideology. Only through a better understanding of Hizballah can we begin to understand its role in the contemporary Middle East and the organization's dangerous potential. In this vein, we will tackle Hizballah from a number of different aspects. First, we will discuss the group's origins, specifically looking at three major impetuses that spurred its formation and early terrorist actions. After its origins, we will review Hizballah's political and military maturation in the late 1980's and 1990's. These first two sections will provide the necessary background to coherently discuss Hizballah's ideology, particularly the core tenets of its ideology that exist to the present-day. Finally, in the light of this information, we will attempt to answer the above questions and determine whether American focus on Hizballah's future terrorist potential is warranted, or whether this focus simply results from the wounds of an earlier period. As American presence in the Middle East and surrounding regions increases, these answers may aid in highlighting future points of contention between our interests and Hizballah's interests.

Hizballah's origins are singularly unique in respect to both location and period. As a self-described national liberation organization, the group ties its foundation to three overriding factors: the Lebanese social and political arrangement, the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979, and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

Impetus

Although Hizballah's development resulted from three major influences, Lebanon's social and political structure (and the Shi'a minority's role in the same,) served as the greatest impetus. Lebanon, formed by the National Pact of 1943 after gaining independence from France, was built on a curious and dangerous confessional system that allotted *de jure* political power on the basis of religious orientation and *de facto* social power on the basis of familial standing within different religious groups. Realizing the tension between Maronite Christian, Sunni Muslim, Shi'a Muslim, and (to a lesser extent) Druze factions, and the inability of any one group to gain a political or economic majority, the National Pact solidified political power on the basis of the 1932 National Census. In doing so, it legitimized the long-standing power-sharing agreement between the dominant Maronite and Sunni factions.

This continuation of the tacit Maronite-Sunni power-sharing agreement was particularly disadvantageous to the Shi'a minority. Comprising approximately nineteen percent of the population in 1950,[1] the Lebanese Shi'a were not only

numerically inferior, but remained at the bottom of the country's social and economic ladders. Largely rural, employed in near-subsistence agricultural activities, and to a large extent illiterate, the Shi'a had no power to gainsay the arrangement of the National Pact. Economic arrangements and advantages followed political power and improved the lot of the Christians and Sunnis, at the expense of the Shi'a.

As with other political arrangements that attempt to freeze a state in the conditions of a particular period, the National Pact was unsustainable,

> the Shi'a community…began to increase in numbers due to higher birth rates common among rural communities. The economic gap between the Shi'as and the Christians, as well as between the Shi'as and the commercially oriented Sunni community, began to widen. Since the political system was inelastic, the Shi'a community was gradually transformed from a passive and marginal group to a more activist group demanding a greater share in Lebanon's pie.[2]

As the Shi'a minority increased in size, it also increased in standing. With large numbers immigrating to urban centers, especially Beirut, the Shi'a became more visible as a disadvantaged underclass. Moreover, the rise of Shi'a political leaders, foremost among them a young Islamic cleric named Musa al-Sadr, gave rise to a new and growing voice of political discontent. Attempting to work within the system, however, only served to further solidify the differences between the religious groups. While the Shi'a grew numerically and improved economically, the other groups, particularly the Maronites, maintained their disproportionate share of power by refusing to recognize the changing nature of the Lebanese population. Clinging to the mandates established on the basis of the 1932 census, Christian and Sunni factions believed that the disparity between power and numbers could last indefinitely, as long as every effort was made to combat Shi'a ascension.

In 1970, another explosive ingredient was added to this already volatile mix. As a result of the Jordanian civil war of September, in which King Hussein rid his state of the corrosive influence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), southern Lebanon experienced a large influx of Palestinian refugees. With the refugees came the PLO, which effectively established a "state within a state" in the area previously dominated by the Shi'a. After the PLO's occupation of southern Lebanon, in addition to vying for power with both internal and external components, the Shi'a bore the additional burden of Israeli military strikes resulting from Palestinian guerrilla attacks on Israel originating from Lebanon. Thus, by the early 1970's, the Lebanese Shi'a community faced legal oppression (political and social) from its countrymen, *de facto* oppression from an occupying power (the PLO), and military attacks for actions that it did not commit or condone.

1975 witnessed the predicted end to such a precarious situation—civil war. As every facet of Lebanon's civil and political society broke down along sectarian lines, al-Sadr, the recognized leader of the Lebanese Shi'a, formed the *Afwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniyya* (Lebanese Resistance Brigades), better known by its acronym, AMAL. AMAL was established "as a military force. Its objective was to protect the political power gained for the Shi'is community during the preceding years."[3] However, due to its lack of organization, late arrival to the militia field (compared to similar organizations of the other political factions,) and inability to compete with the PLO, it was relatively ineffective at accomplishing Shi'a goals. While providing some framework for further development and a more

coherent voice to better represent Shi'a interests, AMAL, nevertheless, failed to play a significant role in the civil war of the mid and late 1970's.

Lebanon's confessional political system, then, acted as the first main impetus for Hizballah's development. Lebanese Shi'as faced 1) an entrenched political and economic order that prevented Shi'a power commensurate with the faction's numbers, 2) oppression from a foreign entity (the PLO) on native soil, and 3) ineffective representation through the efforts of AMAL. The Shi'a could not turn to outside sources of intervention or support (until 1979), as the neighboring countries of the Middle East acted as patrons of other Lebanese factions (in the case of Syria,) had no interest in the emergence of a strong Shi'a faction in Lebanon (the Gulf states,) or were mortal enemies (in the case of Israel.) Unlike other times and in other places of their history, however, the Shi'a would not be content to remain a disadvantaged minority.

<u>Example</u>

The late 1970's were a tumultuous time for not only Lebanon, but for a number of Middle Eastern states. Domestic conflicts and continuing Arab-Israeli antipathy contributed to regional instability. However, no other event of the period had as great an impact as the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979. Developing as a result of the Shah's autocratic rule and his attempts to "Westernize" Iran, fundamentalist Shi'a clerics gained an increasing following among Iran's disenfranchised citizenry, particularly its youth. With the Shah's trip outside of the country for medical treatment and the return of Ayatollah Khomeini from his Paris

exile, the country transitioned overnight to a Shi'a Islamic republic. Sharia was instituted as the rule of law. Clerics were recognized as the legitimate civil authorities. The region's first successful theocracy was established. More importantly, in the Sunni-dominant Middle East, Iran's new regime was a Shi'a theocracy.

The Iranian Revolution had an electrifying effect on Lebanon's Shi'a minority. First, it was an example of Shi'a ascension above the traditional role of the oppressed. Although not like the Shi'a majority that reigned in Iran, Lebanese Shi'a could foresee the day when their rising numbers might give them a sufficient plurality that would support rule (or at least power-sharing) in Lebanon. Likewise, Iran demonstrated the viability of a contemporary theocracy- a style of government that Lebanon's Shi'a began to advocate after experiencing the impracticable confessional system and the inept representation of their own secular leaders. Before his death in 1978, the Iranian-born Lebanese cleric Musa al-Sadr "worked to improve the lot of Lebanese Shi'is…by raising the level of religious solidarity at the expense of the old allegiance to the family structure and the community's traditional leadership."[4] After 1979, the seeds of Sadr's work and the success of Iran's Shi'a combined to further spur the Lebanese Shi'a along a similar path.

<u>Catalyst</u>

Lebanon's civil war had implications beyond the country's borders. Once thought to be the most modern of Middle Eastern countries, the war's instability

soon drove foreign investment from Lebanon's shores, further impoverishing the state. More important, however, were the war's exports. As noted above, the large influx of Palestinians after the PLO's expulsion from Jordan in 1970 significantly contributed to Lebanese instability. The PLO's international actions also had important Lebanese ramifications. Its continuing efforts against Israel resulted in multiple Israeli cross-border attacks, culminating in full-scale invasions of Lebanon in 1978 and 1982. While the former invasion was temporary in nature, the latter was of longer duration. 1982's invasion resulted in the ouster of the PLO from Lebanese territory, but it also resulted in an extended Israeli occupation that was the final catalyst for Hizballah's formation.

Two aspects of this invasion were germane concerning Hizballah's origin. First, as with the overwhelming majority of the Arab population in the Middle East, Hizballah's forefathers not only denied the legitimacy of the Israeli occupation, but also denied the legitimacy of Israel's existence. The Jewish state had no basis other than that of an illegal occupier of stolen (Palestinian) land. Thus, any actions by the entity were corrupted by this "original illegitimacy". Second, while privately celebrating the incursion in its early stages (because it ousted the PLO from Shi'a areas in Lebanon,) the Lebanese Shi'a soon realized that they had simply traded one occupying power for another. As the Israelis were unwilling to revert to the status quo ante (which had allowed the conditions for the PLO's attacks,) they established an Israeli "security zone" in southern/Shi'a Lebanon, complete with an imported militia, the Southern

Lebanese Army (SLA). Thus, rather than experiencing an eagerly anticipated liberation, the Lebanese Shi'a instead faced occupation by their foremost enemy.

The breaking point had been met. Example reinforced impetus, and the catalyst sparked Hizballah's formation. "The Lebanon War of 1982, coming close upon the heels of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979-80, hence found at least a portion of the Shi'a community on the threshold of extremism which would characterize it in the years to come."[5] Without a formal declaration (until 1985) of its existence, Hizballah gained minimal recognition until the 1983 attacks that catapulted it to its preeminent position in both Lebanese politics and world recognition.

Then to Now

Originally formed to combat the Israeli invasion of 1982, Hizballah developed into a legitimate Lebanese social and political actor, an effective regional paramilitary entity, and one of the most globally feared terrorist organizations. Each of these roles, to varying degrees, resulted from Hizballahi successes in both paramilitary and social spheres.

Militarily, Hizballah's exploits began with the 1983 suicide bombings described above. First resolved to combat the Israeli incursion into Lebanon, then undermining the Western peacekeeping efforts perceived to be biased toward the Lebanese Christian factions, and, finally, fighting as one of many ethnic/religious groups in Lebanon's sectarian environment, Hizballah soon gained a wealth of experience in conventional and unconventional warfare. With

the materiel support and training provided by the Iranian *Pasdaran* in Lebanon, Hizballah waged successful guerrilla operations against the Israelis, Sunnis, Maronites, and even other Lebanese Shi'a factions. Knowing that it could not directly confront western military superiority, it engaged American and French peacekeepers through a series of suicide bombings, assassinations, and kidnappings meant to drive the western powers (and their support for the Christians) out of Lebanon. By 1984, efforts against the western powers were successful and the peacekeepers withdrew. Although a complete Israeli withdrawal was not affected until 2000, the withdrawal to the southern security zone by 1985 also indicated Hizballahi battlefield effectiveness. Finally, while not defeating the other confessional groups, Hizballah's actions (sometimes in coordination with AMAL, at other times opposed to the same) at least gained the Lebanese Shi'a minority a respect previously absent. Even after the Syrian-brokered Taif Agreement of 1989, which perpetuated the Christian-Sunni domination of the Lebanese political system,[6] Hizballah carved its niche in Lebanese domestic politics partially as a result of its military actions.

Of equal importance to its military accomplishments were Hizballah's social initiatives. With the civil war and near-total breakdown of government services, Lebanese Shi'a were placed at an even greater disadvantage. In the past, this minority had received less than its equitable share of services from the public coffer. With the war and subsequent chaos of sectarian fighting and foreign (Israeli and Syrian) occupation, even these limited services disappeared. Hizballah moved to fill the void. In addition to military operations, the organization

provided medical, educational, legal, and other services in its areas of control,

(primarily southern Lebanon and parts of Beirut.) In the absence of government,

it increased its domestic acceptance by acting as a *de facto* governing authority.

Since the signing of the Taif Agreement in 1989 and its implementation in

the 1992 Lebanese elections, Hizballah has increased its domestic and

international political stature, while Lebanon has become even more sectarian.

After Taif, the organization advanced its claim to legitimacy by winning electoral

seats for the Lebanese Parliament. Tempering (though not abandoning) its

ideological tenets with contemporary pragmatism, Hizballah's social and political

agendas had the added benefit of gaining the group international recognition as a

"legitimate resistance movement," to the extent that its leader met with the United

Nations' Secretary-General and to the extent that the European Union refuses to

list Hizballah as a terrorist organization.[7] In a modern single day, Hizballah brings

tangible social remedies to thousands of Lebanese citizens through its own

Islamic charitable organizations and influences Lebanese policies through its

representatives in the parliament. Simultaneously, the organization conducts

direct action missions against Israeli targets with its paramilitary groups and

spreads venomous anti-Jewish/anti-western propaganda through its independent

media sources.

How, in a relatively short time-span (at most seventeen years, i.e. from the

group's origin in 1982-3 to the 2000 Israeli withdrawal) was Hizballah able to

accomplish goals seemingly out of proportion to its relative power? Leading the

list of Hizballah's attributes must be its unobstructed foreign external support-

specifically the continuing support of Iran and a tacit understanding with Syria. Without the former consistently bankrolling and training the organization (to the annual tune of tens of millions of dollars,)[8] and the latter previously granting it sanctuary in Syrian-controlled areas of Lebanon, Hizballah would not have had its subsequent domestic or international impact. This support not only gave the organization the means to combat its enemies, but also the means to initiate its own financial and social services to perpetuate its existence. Iranian and Syrian support not only facilitated Hizballah's growth, but the passive presence of the state supporters prevented other actors (other Lebanese factions, the Israelis, the Gulf states) from moving decisively to eradicate the Hizballahi threat.

Hizballah's devotion to its ideological tenets has also played an extremely important role in the organization's longevity. Even when adapting to contemporary political realities, (like the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and the decision to participate in the Lebanese electoral process,) Hizballah has maintained the primacy of its core beliefs. These principles, collectively acting as a lodestone, have allowed Hizballah to compromise (when necessary) and grow without abandoning the group's foundation. Unlike the actions of other Middle Eastern resistance movements (like the PLO,) this rigid adherence gains Hizballah additional support from the "Arab street", limits the scope of its interactions, and provides it a perpetuation distinct from other organizations. As Saad-Ghorayeb notes when concluding her extensive study of the group, "Hizbu'llah has chosen to accord its Lebanese identity and role as an influential

local political force secondary status to its Islamic identity and role as a revolutionary exemplar for the *umma*."[9]

Patience and innovation have also contributed to Hizballah's relative success. As with historical examples in China, Vietnam, and Algeria, goals associated with national resistance cannot be reached overnight, especially when starting from a position of relative weakness. Recognizing this fact, particularly in relation to the Israeli occupation, Hizballah resolved itself to a strategy of attrition and duration, rather than decisive engagement. Likewise, Hizballah contributed to its longevity and success by avoiding torpidity. Confronting different enemies with different tactics; expanding into domestic politics, social services, and media/propaganda; and expanding its relationships to include a variety of allies, it maintained its relevance through innovation.

Ideology

The Core Tenets

As with its origins, Hizballah's ideology was (and continues to be) greatly influenced by both Shi'a history and the success of the Iranian revolution. Based on four key foundations, the ideology is both enduring (in that, philosophically, Hizballah has hardly deviated from the tenets,) and controlling (in that political realities, while sometimes accommodated, are consistently subservient to the ideology.) The group's consistent maintenance of the ideology and adherence to its principles have set Hizballah apart from many of its contemporaries participating in Middle Eastern conflicts.

First, "the cornerstone of Hizbu'llah's intellectual structure is the Islamic state ideal."[10] Hizballah aspires to the establishment of a Lebanese theocracy both modeled after and tied to the Iranian example.[11] As with other Islamic theories, there is no separation between the secular and the spiritual.[12] Rather, clerical leaders act as both religious and secular leaders in a society that, while not based on popular sovereignty, does require a high amount of popular legitimacy for rulers to maintain power.

The adoption of this ideal as the fundamental foundation of Hizballah's ideology can be attributed to two major influences. As with other tenets of its philosophy, the success of the Iranian revolution established, in Hizballah's mind, the feasibility of a functioning modern-day Islamic state. The overthrow of the Shah and installment of Ayatollah Khomeini, followed by the (relatively) smooth transition of power to Khameini upon Khomeini's death, support the model's feasibility. Moreover, the perceived ability of Iran to segregate itself from outside (western) influences and follow an independent and Islamic path reinforced the model's desirability.

The Shi'a role in the failed Lebanese confessional system (as represented by the efforts of AMAL) reinforced the need for an Islamic state. Whether being taken advantage of by the economically dominant Christians or Sunnis, or by their own familial leaders, the confessional system consistently placed the Shi'a in a position from which they could not hope to gain political or economic power. The initial forays of AMAL into the political arena and the resulting compromises[13] only reinforced these disadvantages and the hopelessness of the

Shi'a situation. Thus, the siren's call of the equality and advantages of an Islamic state greatly appealed to Hizballah's future followers.

The second core tenet of Hizballah's ideology involves the constant tension between "the oppressors" and "the oppressed". Although heavily influenced by the Shi'a historical record of being a disadvantaged minority in most of the Sunni-dominated Middle East, this ideological principle also has its basis in the philosophy of Ayatollah Khomeini and the Iranian revolution. However, unlike certain dichotomies found in the Sunni tradition between the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds (*Dar al-Islam* versus *Dar al-Harb*), Saad-Ghorayeb notes that in the Hizballahi ideology, "the oppressors do not represent the non-Muslims and the oppressed the Muslims, but rather those who are socially and economically deprived, politically oppressed and culturally repressed vis-à-vis those who practise this oppression, regardless of their religious identity."[14] This distinction has two important implications. First, it allows and results in a degree of tension between competing Middle Eastern philosophies and regimes. For example, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of Hizballah's largest regional opponents,[15] partially due to Saudi messianic efforts tied to the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam. More important, however, is the fact that the "oppressor vs. oppressed" ideological tenet creates the potential for common cause between Hizballah and many other national liberation organizations-organizations not necessarily based in the Middle East or Islamic in nature.

The totality of the "oppression tenet" also has important implications for Hizballah's overall ideology and subsequent interactions, in that it allows "little

room for compromise. [A] conflicting relationship cannot be resolved by some mechanism leading to a win-win situation."[16] This absolute ideological certainty, combined with an ability to focus on long-term strategic objectives rather than tactical measures and accomplishments, gives Hizballah an uncommon resilience when compared to similar national liberation efforts.

The third core tenet of Hizballah's ideology involves the extermination of Israel. While the catalyst for Hizballah's rise (the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon) certainly falls in this realm, the ideological principle runs deeper, in that "the conflict with Israel is portrayed as 'an existential struggle' as opposed to 'a conflict over land'…there can be no prospect of reconciliation with Israel whose very existence is called into question and whose eradication is pursued."[17] This conflict results from the confluence of a number of different influences. First, one must consider the strong case made for an inherent anti-Judaic strain in the Islamic tradition.[18] Although Jews are considered "People of the Book," Hizballah (and other regional actors) consistently refer to key Koranic verses as justification for an underlying antipathy against Judaism as a religion, rather than Israelis as national or regional actors.[19] Second, the illegitimate formation of Israel in 1947 on what is considered occupied Palestinian land continues to influence Hizballahi ideology. The Israeli occupation of Jerusalem since the Six-Day War (1967) further exacerbates this illegitimacy. Finally, a Hizballahi perception of Israeli regional expansionism (resulting from Israel's occupations after the 1967 war of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights; and the 1982 invasion of

Lebanon) fuels a hatred of the Jewish state, as the latter is seen to be not only illegitimate, but a threat to its Arab neighbors.

Like the "oppression tenet," hatred of Israel imbues Hizballah with a longevity not specific to successes or failures in Lebanon. Since the very existence of Israel is deemed illegitimate, even a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from all Lebanese territory will do little to placate Hizballah. In the purely theoretical realm, the extreme measure of returning to the 1947 borders still will not end Hizballah's animosity, as only the complete eradication of the Jewish state in Palestine and the acquiescence of the remaining Jews to an Islamic Arab/Palestinian regime will suffice. As the recent writings of Hizballah's Deputy Secretary General indicate, the movement's anti-Israeli fervor has not been quenched by the 2000 withdrawal and continues to serve as a *raison d'etre* for the organization:

> Let us not forget our responsibility of supporting the Palestinian people, the association between the Palestinian cause and our own daily realities and how the Palestinian issue reflects on Lebanon and the entire region. This makes belief in liberation a unified, common cause…The Israeli entity represents a grave peril to Palestine and to the entire region, one that should be countered, confronted, and resisted…The basis is to refuse the legitimacy of occupation and to *adopt the persistence of resistance as a core pillar*.[20] [Emphasis added.]

Hizballah's belief in an inherent conflict between Islam and "the West" (principally identified by the United States) serves as the group's final core ideological tenet. The basis for this conflict is two-fold. First, "Hizbu'llah is engaged in 'civilisational' struggle with the West, inherent in which is a rejection of the 'values, beliefs, institutions, and social structures' of Western society."[21] Western culture and influences are doubly damaging, in that they are corruptive and expansive. Thus, Hizballah, while not seeking the eradication of Western

states or Western cultures, does desire their exclusion from the Middle East. Although not nearly as encompassing as Hizballah's antipathy for Israel (for example, Western [specifically American] education is viewed as superior and desirable,)[22] Hizballah does maintain a core belief that Islamic and Western cultures are not compatible. However, these different and conflicting cultures do have the ability to maintain parallel, separate existences.

Consistent Western support for Israel in the ongoing Middle Eastern struggle reinforces Hizballah's belief in this inherent conflict. Through political, ideological, and material support of the Jewish state, Western states remain at odds with Hizballah's strategic goals. Hizballahi perceptions of Western-Israeli collusion, at times, become so extreme as to consider the different states a single entity.[23]

Implications

Hizballah's four core ideological tenets (and the group's sustained maintenance of the same) result in a number of important implications. As has been observed throughout the last twenty years, particularly since the 2000 Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, Hizballah is a regional (even global) actor, rather than a mere Lebanese national liberation organization. Its close identification with Israel's existence/eradication and the exclusion of the West from the Middle East give Hizballah a life beyond Lebanon. Simultaneously, adherence to the strategic goals encompassed in these principles promotes a Hizballahi longevity that prevails over tactical national victories or regional

setbacks. An uncompromising faithfulness to this unchanging ideology, while simultaneously demonstrating a willingness to adjust to contemporary political realities, allows Hizballah to serve as an example to other Middle Eastern actors. This trend acts as a template for the future, in that Hizballah, unlike many other sub-national actors in the Middle East, will not abandon or compromise its core principles for concrete political gains.

Legitimate Threat or Historical Animosity?

Once again, we are confronted by the question as to the true nature of the Hizballah threat, particularly as it relates to the United States. After all, the organization has refrained from attacking American targets, constructed workable compromises with other Western countries (i.e. France,) and even taken the extraordinary step of negotiating with Israel on limited questions- albeit through an intermediary.[24] How, then, can this national liberation group be the clear and present danger perceived by the United States?

Hizballah is a significant threat to the United States' interests in four fundamental ways. Each way is unique, and, in and of itself, an independent threat. First, Hizballah's close relations with other, less stable terrorist groups place it at odds with American global interests. Second, Hizballah's expansion allows the organization a "global reach" not enjoyed by the overwhelming majority of terrorist groups. Third, because of continuing unrest vis-à-vis the Arab-Israeli question, Hizballah controls a match that has the ability to spark a regional conflagration.[25] Fourth, Hizballah's close relations with the Islamic

Republic of Iran place it at odds with an American foreign policy determined to exterminate state sponsors of terrorism and to limit the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Developing each of these points illustrates why the American classification of Hizballah as an extreme danger is warranted.

Since the withdrawal of Western peacekeepers from Lebanon in 1984 and Israel's withdrawal to the southern security zone (pre-2000), Hizballah has had the advantage of territory- space not only generally free from foreign intrusion (except for occasional Israeli incursions,) but actually protected by Lebanon and her "patron", Syria. Able to operate independently in Beirut, the Bekaa Valley, and southern Lebanon, the group has been able to hone its own paramilitary skills and train a variety of terrorist actors. Since the 1980's, intelligence reports have indicated that Western European, Latin American, and Middle Eastern terrorists have enjoyed a high degree of training under the guidance of Hizballah in Lebanese territory.[26] Since the mid-1990's, Palestinian terrorists groups, particularly Palestinian Islamic Jihad and HAMAS, have developed an increasingly close relationship with Hizballah, culminating in Hizballahi-inspired, Palestinian-executed attacks on Israeli targets and attempted large-scale arms transfers. [27]

In conjunction with this relative freedom of action, Hizballah's prestige increased exponentially after May, 2000:

> In the weeks before and after the Israeli withdrawal, the organization [Hizballah] became a symbol and object of admiration to many over the Arab and Muslim world…the organization was considered to have done the impossible- Israel's expulsion from south Lebanon without Israel's receiving any *quid pro quo* for its withdrawal.[28]

Hizballah's example to and coordination with other terrorist groups result in a multitude of dangerous possibilities. As Hizballah has increased the tactical proficiency of these less stable groups (all of which, in one way or another, are at odds with American interests,) the organization has increased other terrorists' abilities to undertake more numerous and more costly operations, without simultaneously increasing Hizballahi control over these same operations. Hizballah's "success" against Israel has also reinvigorated efforts by other groups in the region and provided them an example of a strategy successfully executed against the Jewish state. Unfortunately, as coordination and training continue and as Hizballah continues its resistance against Israel, the organization promotes instability and further conflict in the region, both of which serve to classify the group as an enduring threat to US interests.

No longer resigned to a purely Lebanese role, Hizballah has also increased its reach outside of the Middle East to become one of the few terrorist groups (al Qaeda is another) with a true "global reach." With cells in Europe, North America, South America, and East Asia, the group "continues to increase its terrorist and guerrilla capabilities."[29] While not attacking American targets after 1991, Hizballah proved its operational reach in 1985 with the hijacking of TWA Flight 847 in Athens, and through its successful attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets in Argentina in 1992 and 1994. In South America, the organization has erected sophisticated money-gathering and -laundering schemes, and has started terrorist training camps for like-minded members of the Arab diaspora.[30] Closer to home, Hizballahi cells have been apprehended in the United States

while raising funds for the organization and attempting to purchase sensitive military-related equipment. Thus, while Hizballah may not have yet taken advantage of its capabilities, it has an increasing ability to strike a wide range of American targets, even in the continental United States. While these capabilities exist, and while Hizballah and American interests remain diametrically opposed to each other, the organization poses a latent threat to American interests.

The most probable threat to American interests occurs indirectly and results from Hizballah's continuing enmity toward Israel- an enmity not diminished by Israel's withdrawal from the southern Lebanese security zone in May 2000. With the group focusing on its ideological tenet of Israel's extermination, making common cause with Palestinian groups, increasing its military capabilities (especially rocket capabilities,) and facing "a trend of escalating tension on the Lebanon-Israel border" after the Israeli invasion of the West Bank,[31] Hizballah acts as a credible threat to northern Israeli population and industrial centers. A realistic scenario for large-scale regional war begins with Hizballahi rocket attacks against Israel, followed by an Israeli invasion of Lebanon and/or attacks against Syrian targets. The stimulus for such a scenario could be any of a number of factors: either Syrian or Iranian influence of Hizballah's actions (perhaps in response to escalating tensions with the United States in the context of the war on terrorism,) escalating tension between Hizballah and Israeli forces on the border, or even renewed Israeli military actions in Lebanon resulting from Palestinian-Hizballahi coordinated actions. Again, increased Middle Eastern instability works against American interests in

the region. Moreover, any dispute involving Israel increases the damage to these interests, as the United States would (probably, but not inevitably) side with Israel, damaging American relations with other actors throughout the region.

Yet another latent threat to American security and interests stems from Hizballah's continuing close ties with Iran. As noted previously, Hizballah holds the Islamic Republic as the example to be aspired to. Furthermore, the Lebanese group, since its origin, has relied heavily on Iran for financial support, military training and materiel, sanctuary, and political protection in the ever-shifting Middle Eastern political environment. While not wholly at Iran's mercy or call, the long-standing relationship does result in Hizballahi responsiveness to Iranian overtures, particularly when the interests of the two parties correspond.

As American foreign policy increasingly shifts to combating the origins and supporters of terrorism, escalating tensions between the United States and Iran may lead to the latter relying on Hizballah as a surrogate protector of Iranian interests and security. "Iran could activate Hezbollah terror cells to carry out attacks…if they [the Iranians] felt threatened by America's anti-terror campaign."[32] While "activate" may overstate the relationship between the two entities, events like the current impasse concerning Iran's developing nuclear program and American government officials accusing Iran of harboring al Qaeda terrorists[33] make this possibility more viable. In this case, a likely scenario involves direct Hizballahi attacks against American targets (both within and outside the continental United States) in response to American threats against or attacks on Iran.

An Expanding American Presence

In the wake of American military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, policymakers and pundits have attributed Hizballah's lack of confrontation with the United States to a host of sources- that Hizballah fears being "next on the list" in the American global war on terror; that Syria and/or Iran, fearing the same targeting, have forced Hizballah to temper both its goals and its practices, either to preclude an imminent American attack or to gain favor with the United States; and, finally, that Hizballah fears a new and devastating Israeli offensive, now that the United States is focused elsewhere.[34] Each of these points, however, fails to take into consideration an accurate account of Hizballah's history, its motivations and ideologies, and an accurate depiction of the contemporary situation in the Middle East.

First, a Hizballahi fear of either the United States or Israel is too easily and speciously assumed. This group, perceived as the *single* entity in all of the Arab Middle East to successfully confront the United States and Israel and cause both to withdraw from Lebanese territory, is now suddenly frightened of confrontation? Actions and words speak otherwise. In terms of direct actions, Hizballah's abilities and willingness to confront Israel remain unabated. Calculated responses on the Blue Line by the movement's fighters have maintained an uneasy tension, particularly in the area of the Shebaa Farms. Likewise, two flights of Hizballahi unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in November of 2004 and April of 2005 demonstrated that the organization continues to develop and

implement new means to combat its primary adversary. Finally, Hizballah's indirect opposition to Israel (through both its support of Palestinian terrorist groups and independent operations in the occupied territories) has markedly increased since the latter's withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000.[35] The group has expanded its training, logistical support, and financial assistance of Palestinian radicals- to the extent that some observers estimate that Hizballah now controls 70-80% of Palestinian terrorist attacks.[36] The speeches of Secretary-General Nasrallah similarly indicate a continuing readiness to confront the United States with respect to not only American policies concerning Lebanon, but also with respect to the United States' regional policies.[37] Moreover, when reviewing contemporary American military commitments worldwide and available American military reserves, the prospect of another large-scale deployment to conduct and sustain a campaign against Hizballah in the latter's homeland seems either a distant or a fantastic goal.

Likewise, a Hizballahi response to Iranian and Syrian uncertainties concerning the war on terror is overstated. While Syria and, particularly, Iran exert continuing influence over the group, one of the region's possible dangers is Hizballah's increasing independence from its state sponsors. No longer is the organization wholly dependent on Syria and Iran for its financial resources. Illicit activities, to include drug cultivation and trafficking, computer piracy, and extortion of funds from Lebanese expatriate communities have combined with Hizballah's legal money-making ventures and its charitable receipts to give the organization a financial life of its own. In addition, the regional impacts of Israel's

2000 withdraw from Lebanon hereto have significance, to the extent that the assumed subordinate-senior relationships between Nasrallah and Bashar Assad, and likewise, between Nasrallah and Iran's Khamenei are suspect.[38] To then assume that Hizballah is simply a tool of either the Iranians or the Syrians is a gross oversimplification of the relationships in question.

Instead, three overlapping considerations better explain the relative calm and lack of a direct confrontation between the United States and Hizballah after March 2003. First, the current Lebanese domestic situation requires a significant portion of the group's resources and concentration. One should never forget the impetus of Hizballah's development, i.e. the plight of the Lebanese Shi'a in a deeply divided, sectarian Lebanon. An enduring undercurrent of hostilities in the environment of a failing state forces Hizballah to turn first toward Lebanon. There it must devote significant financial and political resources to provide the security, education, and welfare that ensure the maintenance of its political base.

Second, Hizballah's entire history speaks to the sagacity of *indirect* confrontation. Its successes against Western peacekeepers in 1983-4 and Israel in 2000 came not as the result of large-scale military conflicts, but, rather, through the patient resolve of the revolutionary. Thus, the better-posed question might be why policymakers have expected a direct, overt response from Hizballah, instead of its contemporary actions of Palestinian support, husbanding and collection of armaments, financial-source expansion, and political and social inspiration of the Iraqi Shi'a.[39] Why would an observer assume that an organization that speaks of resistance and martyrdom over decades would now

risk all in one grand engagement against the world's lone superpower? What Hizballahi end would such an engagement serve? In short, Hizballah seeks not to act as the sole revolutionary for the Middle East's rejection of the West and reversion to Islam, but, rather, as the vanguard of multiple Arab revolutions. Patience and fortitude, rather than poorly orchestrated and ineffective pinprick attacks against American occupation forces, better serve Hizballah's final objectives.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Hizballah has no need to act overtly when its objectives are being achieved by American actions. In Iraq, fundamental Hizballahi regional goals are being realized without a single member's actions. For example, as in its own Lebanese domestic sphere, Hizballah seeks a greater regional tolerance and empowerment of the Shi'a. No other Iraqi ethnic group has benefited as greatly (when comparing its pre- and post-Saddam situations) as have the Iraqi Shi'a. A group that was once at the mercy of the Sunni minority now sees its senior religious leader (Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani) setting the tone for domestic affairs, a son at the head of the state's transitional government, and its people with the very real prospect of gaining political power commensurate to their size. Simultaneously, Hizballah's desire to isolate Middle Eastern societies from the corrosive influences of Westernization meets with some success. After more than a year of occupation, liberalization, and reconstruction, the most recent surveys available indicated that the United States' large-scale presence and efforts had failed to make a dent in the Iraqi public's adverse perceptions of the United States and most things American.[40]

Again, the question becomes why Hizballah would choose to act overtly in such an environment.

Modern Realities, American Responses

Unlike al Qaeda, Hizballah presently demonstrates no overt, daily antipathy toward the United States. Rather, it has expressed a desire for dialogue with the United States and any other actor willing to re-visit an Israeli-biased Middle Eastern policy.[41] While the Wahhabi tradition of al Qaeda is messianic in nature, Hizballah is almost anti-messianic, in that its goal is to "make Shi'as safe in the world," rather than "make the 'world safe for Islam.'"[42] It has rarely executed offensive operations outside the Middle East, except when attacking Israeli targets in South America and Great Britain in response to the Israeli assassination of Hizballah's Secretary-General in 1992. Taking these factors into consideration, why can't the United States reach an accommodation with this national resistance movement? Would it not be in the best interests of the United States to simply adopt a "live and let live" attitude concerning Hizballah? Why does the United States persist in cataloging Hizballah as one of the world's most dangerous terrorist groups?

One must first consider the new world that the United States faces (or at least perceives) after September 11th, 2001. Although not a new threat, the danger posed by independent terrorist groups achieved a different magnitude with al Qaeda's attacks in the United States. More than just an attack on the government or economy, the United States perceived al Qaeda's actions and

accompanying rhetoric to be an attack on the American way of life- the opening chapter of Huntington's "clash of civilizations." The United States' response has embraced this clash by not only pursuing al Qaeda, but also by identifying other imminent or potential threats to American interests. The new national security strategy of preemption, President Bush's oft-repeated "with us or against us" mantra, and the concrete steps in the wake of each demonstrate a willingness to eliminate these threats. Unfortunately, the steps taken to eliminate some threats, like Operation Iraqi Freedom, inevitably perpetuate the conflict with other threats.

At the same time, the United States must begin to realize that it also faces a changing world that includes changing actors with evolving priorities. Lebanon and Hizballah of 2005 are far more complicated entities than their 1983 predecessors. Lebanon's elections and the withdrawal of Syrian military forces open far more favorable horizons for the Lebanese people. Furthermore, the modern Hizballah is a far cry from the ragtag band of terrorists of American memory. New capabilities and relationships make the prospect of combating the group much more difficult. In addition to the capabilities of machine guns and suicide bombers, Hizballah now possesses advanced military hardware in the forms of rocketry and UAVs. Politically and diplomatically, the organization is recognized and supported internationally and enjoys particular support in the Middle East. Ignoring these developments of the last two decades will guarantee the demise of any related American foreign policy.

Any policy recommendation concerning Hizballah must not only consider the organization's core tenets and the group's latent and potentially catastrophic

capabilities, but also the current environment in which the United States must operate. Hizballah is a threat not because of what it **will** do, but because of what it **can** do. Given Hizballah's experiences, its inherent hatred of Israel, its belief in the incompatibility of Western and Islamic cultures, its ties to Syria and Iran, its global reach, its predilection for the use of alternate forms of force (i.e. terrorism,) and the improbability of significant changes to American policies in the region, there should be no question as to whether Hizballah is a threat to the United States. Threats derive from both capabilities and intentions. In the case of Hizballah, the former has been quantified, and the latter needs only a spark to initiate action against American interests.

Prescriptions

In relation to Lebanon and Hizballah, American policymakers must return to first principles. What is our endstate concerning both? What grand strategy has been developed to achieve the goal? Concerning the specifics of this study, it appears that the two guiding principles undergirding current American policy, that is the promotion of democracy and the Global War on Terror, directly contradict each other.[43] As a result, significant progress has not been made in regard to either. Therefore, the prescriptions offered herein assume a future prioritization between the two competing demands. Such an assumption, while theoretical, opens the field to possibilities ignored by the present administration's "with us or against us" approach to diplomatic relations.

Democracy before Terror

A generation's worth of Lebanese history has been compressed into the last year. Twelve months ago, the Syrian military ran rampant in Lebanon, and Bashar Assad's regime dictated the state's course. Actions, including Assad's unilateral extension of Lahoud's presidency and the use of Lebanon's economy as an adjunct to the Syrian economy, demonstrated that the Lebanese enjoyed little control over their own country. The assassination of Rafik Hariri in February opened the floodgates to rectifying the transgressions of the past three decades and to the further development of a Lebanese representative government. Building on the tenuous agreement of Ta'if, the Lebanese domestic opposition and the international pressure that led to the Syrian withdrawal have, once again, reinvigorated the possibilities in the Lebanese political system.

Hizballah plays a prominent, if not dominant, role in this democratic process. Hizballah's most recent victories in the May-June elections included sweeping the southern districts of the country and gaining two additional parliamentary seats for its Loyalty to the Resistance bloc. Even with the lasting sectarian constraints on the Shi'a population, the organization has developed into a key actor in Lebanon's political system, as a result of both demographics and perceptions of its integrity.

One diplomatic theme prominent contemporarily is the idea that such democratic participation may lead to a de-radicalization of terrorist organizations.[44] Proponents of this argument find some merit in Hizballah's development over the last decade. Since 1992, when the movement entered its

first parliamentary race, Hizballah has become more and more entrenched in the Lebanese political system. The most recent stage of this development included a Hizballah representative assuming a seat in the new Lebanese cabinet for the first time in history. Perhaps not coincidentally, Hizballah's guerrilla and terrorist acts against foreign entities over the last decade have decreased and assumed a greater "maturity." For instance, most overt military actions against Israel are only undertaken as direct responses to perceived or documented violations of Lebanese sovereignty by the Israelis. Likewise, Hizballah's anti-Western actions have been extremely limited since the late 1980's. One obvious example has been the group's limited response to the American invasion of Iraq.[45]

Beyond Hizballah, the prospects of Lebanon's further democratization indicate possibilities far more favorable than in most other Middle Eastern countries. One positive aspect of Lebanon's ethnic/religious composition has been the maintenance of competing and independent power bases that prevent the rise of an overarching domestic authoritarian regime. While the state's economic situation requires significant attention, the Lebanese population is educated and provides good material for the strong middle class essential to any functioning democracy. Moreover, polls indicate that the Lebanese are optimistic about democracy's prospects both domestically and regionally.[46] While the confessional system requires significant revamping, traditions of electoral participation are developing. Finally, the mass protests of February and March of this year indicate a growing ability of Lebanese political factions across the spectrum to mobilize without violence. Assuming that Syrian influence in

Lebanon will continue to ebb following the Syrian military's withdrawal, no other Middle Eastern state faces better prospects of democratization.

Specific American policies furthering this democratization involve both more and less American intervention in areas related to Lebanon's domestic affairs. Syrian influence must continue to be weakened, and American pressure on the Assad regime will facilitate expanding the independent political space necessary for Lebanon's democratization. Specifically, direct pressure concerning Syrian indifference or support of insurgents infiltrating Iraq provides an excellent indirect way of opening this political space. In direct relations, the United States would be well-served to expand its relations with the Lebanese National Army,[47] as a professional and independent Lebanese army will support democratization and will act as a possible check on future Hizballahi actions. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the United States must moderate its public stances concerning Hizballah and the Lebanese situation. American efforts like an overarching emphasis on UN Security Council Resolution 1559 (targeting Hizballah by ostensibly calling for the disarmament of Lebanese militias) provide no buttress for Lebanese stability and no advancement toward such disarmament, but they do perpetuate a perception of the United States as a global bully.

Should the United States prioritize democracy over combating terrorism in its future foreign policy concerning Lebanon, the Bush Administration and its successors face a bitter pill. If participation in the democratic process leads to Hizballah's de-radicalization, then American decision-makers must not only allow

the Lebanese the room to experience democracy's birth pangs (and, therefore, subject the United States to a continuing Hizballahi terrorist capability in the interim,) but they must also cope with relating to Hizballahi representatives acting as the legitimate, elected authorities of a Lebanese government. To do otherwise, to preach democratic transition in the Middle East and then denigrate the region's elected representatives reinforces the popular stereotype of American power as American imperial hubris.

Terror before Democracy

Although the use of fraud in every action is detestable, nonetheless in managing war it is a praiseworthy and glorious thing, and he who overcomes the enemy with fraud is praised as much as the one who overcomes it with force.
-Machiavelli, <u>Discourses on Livy</u>, III.40

To date, American policy concerning the elimination of the threat generated by foreign terrorist organizations has been equal parts ineffective and inconsistent. In relation to Hizballah and countless other actors, recent policy appears to be the antithesis of Theodore Roosevelt's "speak softly and carry a big stick." In many parts of the world, such unproductive action reinforces a stereotype of American hubris. Thus, if we identify Hizballah as a continuing threat to American interests, prudence and perceptions dictate that the United States find a more effective policy to contain, reduce, or eliminate the threat.

Any such policy must be constrained by contemporary considerations. "Preemptive action" flows easily from the tongue, but the United States military is ill-postured to initiate and maintain new operations in Lebanon. Between Iraq, Afghanistan, and the training periods required to prepare for each environment,

the American military is stretched thin. In short, a new military mission against Hizballah- an entrenched organization popularly supported by a significant segment of the Lebanese population- is simply not feasible. To this planning constraint, one must add a host of other variables: the regional popularity of Hizballah, the regional opposition to the United States, and the tenuous situation in Israel and the occupied territories. Taken together, these considerations highlight the infeasibility and inadvisability of overt action.

However, Lebanon's recent instability points to a window of opportunity in which to reduce the Hizballahi threat. Although entering its third decade as an organization, Hizballah is still governed by its hierarchy of interests- its Impetus (the plight of the Lebanese Shi'a,) Example (the Iranian revolution,) and Catalyst (the Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanon.) While one of the movement's founding principles remains the elimination of the state of Israel, Hizballah has only been able to advance on this front since the 2000 Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. The withdrawal, and Israel's subsequent reduction of support to its local ally (the South Lebanon Army,) gained the Lebanese Shi'a a larger amount of security and stability, allowing Hizballah to refocus its efforts from the support of its constituency to a more direct role in the fight against Israel. Thus, it should have come as no surprise to observers that Hizballah's support of the Palestinian factions increased exponentially after May 2000. Without Israelis in Lebanon and with a relative calm between competing domestic factions, Hizballah could focus its efforts on another goal.

The question, then, revolves around a simple strategy. Constrained in its use of military force, what policies should the United States undertake to cause Hizballah to refocus its efforts? In short, if the United States could covertly sustain political uncertainty in Lebanon, might not that uncertainty cause Hizballah to revert to protection of the Lebanese Shi'a- thus reducing both its direct threat to the United States and the threat to regional stability that Hizballah provides by supporting HAMAS and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad? After Hariri's assassination, the recent elections, and the release of Mehlis' report, Lebanon's political situation is precarious. Thus, micro-movements by the United States, like surreptitious support to Michel Aoun's Maronite faction or the strengthening of AMAL's political abilities through third-parties, may provide the limited amount of leverage necessary for Hizballah to focus its efforts on the organization's domestic power base and political viability.

To address the first and most obvious question, fomenting Lebanese domestic instability is distasteful, but necessary if one prioritizes terror over democratization when dealing with Lebanon. The strategy fails to fall under the umbrella of foreign policy highlighted in President Bush's second inaugural address. It offers no plan for long-term Lebanese stability or for a decrease of Syrian influence in Lebanon. Freedom of the individual Lebanese citizen is hardly the primary concern. Lebanon as a "failed state" has possible negative implications. In the end, however, the strategic benefits may outweigh the costs. Should political uncertainty increase in Lebanon, the United States might find Hizballah returning to its domestic priorities. Such a strategy could also yield

promising results concerning Syria, as Assad's regime becomes forced to deal

with multiple outside influences simultaneously. Also, decreased Hizballahi

support to certain Palestinian factions may force these factions into greater

coordination with the Palestinian Authority. In the end, the strategy requires

trading an increase in Lebanese domestic instability for the possibility of greater

regional stability and American security. From American security and policy

standpoints, the critical unanswered question is whether an even less stable

Lebanon looks radically different than its contemporary alter ego.

A Third Way?

The two strategic avenues outlined above face similar obstacles, in that

both are predicated upon the overarching contemporary goals of democratization

in the Middle East and fighting the Global War on Terror. One must ask,

however, if such limitations on American foreign policy are wise, either in a

general context or when planning to meet the Hizballahi threat. Therefore, a final

strategic option discounts both of these policy limitations and, instead, focuses

on constraining and containing Hizballah.

New options require new assumptions, which are two-fold. First, from an

American grand strategic perspective, Lebanon is hardly a prized jewel that

requires the commitment of significant American attention or resources.

Economic relations and geostrategic importance (or lack thereof) illustrate this

point. For example, Lebanon is a relatively insignificant trading partner with the

United States. Presently, the state ranks 76th as an importer of American goods

(behind such notable states as Haiti and Vietnam,) and 130th as an exporter of goods to the United States (outdistanced by the likes of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Swaziland.) Moreover, the types of goods exchanged between the two states do not indicate a trade relationship that is fundamental to American economic or military requirements.[48] Likewise, from a geo-strategic perspective, Lebanon offers few, if any, advantages not presently available to the United States through its relationships with Turkey, Jordan, Cyprus, or even the Kurds of northern Iraq. Finally, the benefits of a democratic Lebanon are chimerical. Not only does this illusion fail to consider democratization's significant obstacles in Lebanon, but it overstates the country's regional importance.

The second critical assumption modifies our conception of Hizballah as a threat. To reiterate, Hizballah remains a threat to the United States, because of the organization's core ideological tenets and its significant capabilities. However, events since the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 provide a critical caveat to the interpretation of this threat. In short, Hizballah's lack of reaction to American actions in Iraq is extremely significant. On its surface, this inaction seemingly contradicts the Hizballahi core ideological tenet of separating Islam (and the Middle East) from the West. In reality, it indicates a pragmatic Hizballahi regional plan that affirms the organization's position as a vanguard for change in the Middle East and as an example for other national organizations, rather than a position for Hizballah as the primary opponent of American interests in every part of the region. When attempting to predict future Hizballahi actions, this modified assumption suggests the presence of political latitude for American foreign policy

in the Middle East, as the continuation of the status quo (engagement in Iraq and on the Arabian Peninsula, while not physically interfering in Lebanon or Iran) would not elicit terrorist attacks by Hizballah.

A new American strategy to deal with the Hizballahi threat considers these assumptions, the organization's popular appeal, and the American inability and lack of desire to commit significant resources to combating this threat. Much like the other prescriptions provided, this new strategy is founded upon a tempering of American rhetoric. Recurring surveys in the region indicate that the American government is simply not trusted. Therefore, rather than foundering about in search of an effective public diplomacy campaign, it will be more beneficial (particularly in the short-term) to decrease the number and reduce the tone of official statements concerning Hizballah.

Second, the United States must work to constrain and reduce Hizballahi capabilities outside the borders of Lebanon. Hizballahi cells in the United States, Europe, and South America are far more threatening than the thousands of rockets aimed at Israeli population centers from south Lebanon. Under the cloak of the Global War on Terror, the United States must work independently and with its allies to dismantle Hizballah's international fund-raising, weapons procurement, and operational cells. Domestically, the Justice Department and local law enforcement authorities must increase their fact-finding capabilities and coordinate their abilities to reduce Hizballah's American presence. Internationally, the United States must support the increasingly successful actions of allies to reduce Hizballah's capabilities[49] and still be prepared to

conduct independent covert strikes globally. Implementing such policies

acknowledges the fact that the United States has little influence to change the

enduring ideological tenets of Hizballah—tenets that have gained the

organization overwhelming Lebanese and Middle Eastern support. At the same

time, such a strategy affirms the latent Hizballahi threat to American interests and

seeks to reduce this threat by reducing the global reach of our competitor.

Conclusion

American foreign policy faces a critical juncture. After four years of fighting

the Global War on Terror, significant evidence indicates that the United States is

further from its goal of security and its ambition of universal democracy than

when the venture began in 2001. In some aspects, a critical appraisal of

American goals, methods, and capabilities is essential. In relation to Hizballah,

the United States government must develop a more coherent policy that works to

reduce the Hizballahi threat. Alternatively, the United States could choose to

publicly ignore the movement's growing political sway, while checking Hizballah's

current capabilities and future terrorist operations. To date, publicly chastising the

organization while failing to reduce its terrorist capabilities simply gains and

maintains American adversaries without reducing the threats to American

interests. In the long-term, an effective American foreign policy must make an

honest assessment of Hizballah's ideological tenets and consider appropriate

responses to (or through) these enduring obstacles to American interests.

[1] Eyal Zisser, "Hizballah in Lebanon- at the Crossroads," Bruce Maddy-Weitzman and Efraim Inbar, eds., Religious Radicalism in the Greater Middle East (London: Frank Cass, 1997) 94.

[2] Sami G. Hajjar, "Hizballah: Terrorism, National Liberation, or Menace," Monograph for the Strategic Studies Institute (Carlisle: US Army War College, Aug. 2002) 4.

[3] Zisser, 95.

[4] Zisser, 95 (endnote 10)

[5] Zisser, 96.

[6] Zisser, 100.

[7] "Hezbollah." MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, available at http://www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=3101. Accessed 11 Aug. 2005.

[8] Jeffrey Goldberg, "In the Party of God: Are Terrorists in Lebanon Preparing for a Larger War?" The New Yorker (online edition, 14 Oct. 2002): 3.

[9] Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion (Sterling: Pluto Press, 2002) 191.

[10] Saad-Ghorayeb, 16.

[11] Hajjar, 8.

[12] Hajjar, 6.

[13] Hajjar, 5.

[14] Saad-Ghorayeb, 17.

[15] Saad-Ghorayeb, 79.

[16] Hajjar, 11.

[17] Saad-Ghorayeb, 135.

[18] For a thorough development of this argument, see Saad-Ghorayeb, 168-186.

[19] Verse 5:82, as quoted in Saad-Ghorayeb, 175.

[20] Naim Kassem, "Hizbullah's Future." Available online at http://www.naimkassem.org/materials/books/hizbullah/Hizbullah's%20Future.htm. Accessed 28 January 2005.

[21] Saad-Ghorayeb, 88.

[22] Hajjar, 14-15.

[23] "Above all," he [Sayyed Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah] said, "we must not forget that the nation's problems started with the American-Israeli occupation of Arab states." Karine Raad, "Fadlallah calls for Sunni-Shiite unity." The Daily Star 04 Aug. 2005, online edition.

[24] Augustus Richard Norton, "Hizballah: From Radicalism to Pragmatism?" Middle East Policy Council Journal 5.4 (Jan. 1998): 5.

[25] "Indeed, in contrast to the low-intensity conflict on the Palestinian front, Hizballah's actions have the potential to trigger a full-scale, inter-state war." Rachel Stroumsa and Yossi Baidatz, "From Sheba'A to al Quds: The Evolution of Hizballah," Peace Watch #300 (Washington DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 15 Dec. 2000) 1.

[26] Jeffrey Goldberg, "In the Party of God: Are Terrorists in Lebanon Preparing for a Larger War?" 4.

[27] Reuven Paz, "From Tehran to Beirut to Jerusalem: Iran and Hizballah in the Palestinian Uprising," Peace Watch #313 (Washington DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Mar. 26, 2001) 1-2; Specifically, the Karine-A transfer from Iran to the Palestinian Authority, in which Hizballah was implicated. See Jeffrey Goldberg, "In the Party of God: Are Terrorists in Lebanon Preparing for a Larger War?" 14.

[28] Eyal Zisser, "Hizballah: New Course or Continued Warfare," Middle East Review of International Affairs 4.3 (Sep. 2000): 5.

[29] Goldberg, "In the Party of God: Are Terrorists in Lebanon Preparing for a Larger War?" 3.

[30] Goldberg, "In the Party of God: Hezbollah Sets-up Operations in South America and the United States," 2; "Hizbullah." Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism, available online at http://www4.janes.com/K2/doc.jsp?K2DocKey=/content1/janesdata/binder/jwit/jwit0296.htm@current.htmProd_Name=JWIT.htm@current&QueryText=null&Prod_Name=JWIT&image=browse&#toclink-j0010490021975. Accessed 11 Aug. 2005.

[31] Hajjar, 32.

[32] Goldberg, "In the Party of God: Hezbollah Sets-up Operations in South America and the United States," 10.

[33] General media interview by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, as aired by Fox News Corporation, 21 May 2003.

[34] Yoram Yoffe and Jason O'Connor, "Is Hizballah Resuming the Offensive?" PeaceWatch #427 (Washington DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 8 Aug. 2003) 1.

[35] Mohammed Daraghmeh, "Palestinians Arrest 2 for Israel Bombing" The Times [Frankfort Indiana] 26 Feb. 2005, online edition, 1; "Iran and Hizballah Finance Terrorism in the Territories," Tel Aviv Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center. Available through the Foreign Broadcasting Information Service at https://www.fbis.gov (Document number GMP20041208000212) Accessed online 06 Jan. 2005.

[36] Zohar Palti and Matthew Levitt, "Hizballah's West Bank Foothold," PeaceWatch #463 (Washington DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 18, 2004) 1-2.

[37] "But if anyone thinks of disarming the resistance, we will fight him like the martyrs in Karbala fought." Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Speech on the fifth anniversary of the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. 26 May 2005. Available online at http://www.manartv.com; "…we will maintain our presence in this confrontation to defend Lebanon and Syria when they are targeted. We will support our brethren in Palestinian [sic], our brethren in Iraq, and will stand by Iran according to our capacity. The Americans do not understand the meaning of the call: "at your service, O' Hussein." Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Speech at the March in Defense of the Holy Sites in Iraq. May 21, 2004. Available online at http://www.nasrollah.org.

[38] Adam Shatz, "In Search of Hezbollah," The New York Review of Books 29 Apr. 2004, online edition, 3.

[39] "Kuwaiti Daily: Iran Delivered Missiles to Hizbullah in Lebanon via Syria," MEMRI Special Dispatch Series No. 765 (Washington DC: The Middle East Media Research Institute) 19 Aug. 2004, 1; James Risen, "Hezbollah in Iraq, Refrains From Attacks on Americans," The New York Times 24 Nov. 2003, online edition, A10.

[40] For example, in February 2004, opinion polls indicated that 41.2% of Iraqis felt that the US-led invasion of Iraq humiliated the country. Likewise, in March-April 2004, only 23% of Iraqis surveyed (and only 11% of Iraqi Shi'a) had a favorable opinion of the United States. In the same poll, more Iraqis (and more Iraqi Shi'a) could morally justify attacks against US forces than they could military actions by the United States and Great Britain. Poll results available at Polling The Nations database under Subject Heading: Iraq. Database accessed 18 Oct. 2004 via the United States Military Academy library.

[41] Norton, 7.

[42] Hajjar, 36.

[43] For example, the United States refuses to deal with Lebanon's new Energy Minister, Muhammed Fneish, who is a popularly elected member of the Lebanese parliament, because he represents Hizballah's Loyalty to the Resistance bloc.

[44] "Mainstreaming Terrorists," The Economist 25 June 2005: online edition. Accessed via LexisNexis Academic Aug. 15, 2005.

[45] Risen, A10.

[46] 83% of Lebanese citizens surveyed believe that democracy can work in their country and that it is not a political system specific to the West. Likewise, 46% of those citizens surveyed are optimistic about the Middle East's increasing democratization. "American Character Gets Mixed Reviews: US Image Up Slightly, but Still Negative," The Pew Global Attitudes Project (Washington, DC: The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2005) available online at http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/247.pdf. Lebanese polling data accessed from Polling The Nations database on Oct. 24, 2005.

[47] Mark C. Arnold, "Special-Operations Forces' Interoperability With Coalition Forces," Special Warfare 18.2 (Sept. 2005) 28.

[48] Vehicles (and vehicle parts), cereals, and tobacco products account for more than 55% of US exports to Lebanon, while pearls, precious stones, and furniture products account for over one-third of Lebanese exports to the US. For these and other statistics concerning American-Lebanese trade, please refer to Trade Stats Express at http://tse.export.gov, accessed 24 Oct. 2005.

[49] Maggy Ayala Samaniego, "Drug trafficking ring that financed Lebanese extremist group Hizballah dismantled," El Tiempo 22 June 2005, online edition. Translation provided by the Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, FBIS Document number- GMP20040820000204; "Highlights: Argentina-Brazil-Paraguay Triborder Press 3 Aug 05," Foreign Broadcasting Information Service Report, FBIS Document number- LAP20050803000094. Accessed 04 Aug. 2005.

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