From Terrorism to Legitimacy:
Political Opportunity Structures and the Case of Hezbollah[1]

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In the last quarter of a century several groups, who were at one time or another engaged in terrorist activities, have made a step toward political legitimacy by competing in democratic or relatively open elections.[2] Sinn Fein/Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) in Northern Ireland, Hamas in Palestine, al Fatah/al Aqsa Martyr Brigades in Palestine, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan, the Batasuna/Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) in Spain, and Hezbollah/Islamic Resistance in Lebanon are sometimes cited as examples.[3] This is significant because according to Marina Ottaway of the Carnegie Endowment:

> there is ample evidence that participation in an electoral process forces any party, regardless of ideology, to moderate its position if it wants to attract voters in large numbers.[4]

Assuming that Ottaway is correct, the decision by a terrorist group (who, by definition, represent extremist positions) to participate in the legitimate political processes can be transformative in terms of the group's goals. Thus, it is very important to identify and study the factors which are conducive to or create not only an opportunity for a terrorist group to become a legitimate participant in a relatively open political process but also, over time, to become an active and engaged political participant.

Hezbollah, with a long history of committing terrorist acts against Israel, France, and the United States (US), is clearly making the transition from a terrorist group to a legitimate political party and playing an increasing and active part in the Lebanese political system. It elected 14 of its members to the Parliament and two of its members to the Cabinet in

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[1] This particular transliteration - Hezbollah - will be used throughout this paper. Note that there are other common transliterations: Hizbullah, Hizballah, Hezballah, Hisbollah, and Hizb Allah.

[2] There is an overwhelming body of literature concerning the definition of terrorism. The definition of terrorism or what constitutes a terrorist act or a terrorist group is very controversial and will neither be addressed nor argued in this paper. For the purposes of this research the paper will simply identify terrorist groups based on the following composite definition: subnational actors that engage in the use of illegal force/violence and unconventional methods against "soft" or innocent civilian and passive military targets. These acts are aimed at purposefully affecting an audience and have political motives or goals (Martin 2006, 47).

[3] Note that Sinn Fein is the political wing of the Provisional Irish Republican Army, al Fatah is the political wing of the al Aqsa Martyr Brigades, Hezbollah is the political wing of the Islamic Resistance, and Batasuna is the political wing of ETA. It is also important to note that Hezbollah, Hamas, al Fatah, and Sinn Fein were able to participate in the political process as legitimate or official political parties. The Muslim Brotherhood is not an official party but candidates affiliated with it won 20 percent of the seats in the Egyptian People's Assembly in 2005. Batasuna was banned from officially participating in elections in Spain but another party – the Basque Nationalist Action – that is sympathetic to Batasuna/ETA received 7.5% of the municipal vote in the region in May of 2007.

[4] Her statement is taken from Michael Herzog (2006, 83-4).

2005. By studying Hezbollah it is possible to identify key institutional factors that provide an opportunity for it to participate: it (Hezbollah) has an organizational structure that separates its political and military wings; it has a demonstrated capability for organizational learning and tactical and strategic rational decision making; it has substantial political support among a significant section of the population; and there exists a relatively open political system in Lebanon that not only allows it to participate but provides an incentive for it to participate. A close look at these institutional factors and other, more fluid and contextual factors, such as the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000, will not only explain Hezbollah's decision to participate but also over time its deepening engagement in the political process. The study will also allow one to hypothesize about other terrorist groups that also are making the transition to political legitimacy.

Political Opportunity Structures

This paper will focus on Hezbollah and use the concept of political opportunity structures (the independent variables) to understand the process whereby a terrorist group makes the transition to a legitimate and active participant in the political processes (dependent variable). The concept of political opportunity structure was originally developed to understand the mobilization, organizational formation, and policy outcomes of social movements (Meyer and Minkoff 2004, 1465). The concept refers to the specific configurations of resources, institutional arrangements, and historical precedents for social mobilization which facilitate the development of protest movements in some instances and constrain them in others (Kitschelt 1986, 58). Although primarily applied to social movements the concept has been applied to riots (Eisinger 1973), interest groups (Minkoff 1994), political parties (Lucardie 2000), dissident organizations (Amenta and Zylan 1991), success of right wing extremist parties (Arzheimer and Carter 2006), international organizations (Nelson 2006), ethnic associations (Hooghe 2005), and strikes and political violence (McAdam 1982; Jenkins 1985; Tarrow 1989; and Tilly 1995). Arzheimer and Carter (2006, 422) state that despite the fact that the concept of political opportunity structure is very broad, the majority of the studies agree "that fixed or permanent institutional features combine with more short-term, volatile, or conjectural factors to produce an overall particular opportunity structure."

A primary institutional factor affecting whether or not a terrorist group participates in the political processes is the ability of the group to form a political party and to participate legally in the electoral processes. Minimally the state must recognize or allow the group or at least the political wing of the group to participate in the political process. As long as the group is not allowed by the government to participate legally in elections, there cannot be a decision to participate openly. For example, it is known that members of the Muslim Brotherhood are elected to the Egyptian parliament but these members cannot act as an organized party because the Muslim Brotherhood is considered to be illegal by the government. As another example, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was allowed to participate in local elections in Algeria in 1990 and it did by winning 55 per cent of the votes. The Algerian military intervened and determined the FIS to be illegal after the first round of parliamentary elections in 1992 when it became very clear that it actually

may win a majority of seats. The FIS exists today as an illegal party that is unable to participate openly.

Beyond this minimum institutional requirement, the type of electoral structure may provide a greater or lesser enticement for the group to participate. For example, it is known that the more proportional the electoral system, the greater the incentives for groups to enter the electoral contest and for voters to support a new political party (Duverger 1972, 23-32). To put it another way, a winner-take-all system, as in the U.S., does not encourage small parties or parties with more extremist views to participate because they cannot be elected without a majority vote. At the same time, it is also important that the political system provides checks and balances on its participants. This not only prevents a single party from dominating the political processes but it makes it less likely that other parties will attempt to prevent the new party from participating. The fact that one party cannot dominate the process also forces a moderation of demands by all participating parties. A consociational democratic system requires a grand coalition of representatives from all major groups in society who rule by consensus. This means that major policy changes require an overwhelming majority or complete consensus of all groups (Lijphart 1977, 28).

With regard to terrorist groups it is important to note their organizational structure. There should be separate political and military wings or organs within the group. By definition the military wing is limited to strictly military operations. It is the political wing that participates in the political process and typically sees the bigger picture and can put military operations within an overall strategy that includes other means of achieving the goals. This separation is crucial because at some point the political wing must come to dominate the military wing in terms of strategic analysis and decisions. This cannot happen without a clear separation between those individuals who function in the political wing and those that function in the military wing. For example, in a comprehensive study of the military decisions of the PIRA, M.L.R. Smith (1997, 178) argues that when the balance of power between Sinn Fein (political wing) and the PIRA (military wing) shifted to Sinn Fein, a more "total strategy" was possible where "the military instrument could be governed by calculations of its efficacy rather than ideological tradition." Following up on this, Jackson (2005b, 119) argues that this development is necessary for "organizational learning" to take place at the strategic level. The ability of an organization to learn is a crucial institutional development. Jackson (2005a, ix, xi, 1) states that without this ability the achievement of a group's goals is simply a matter of chance. Organizational learning includes the ability to acquire, interpret, distribute, and store information and knowledge.[5] It allows the group

> to find solutions to problems, modify tactics and behaviors, systematically fulfill
> its needs, and advance its strategic agenda by design. Learning enables groups to
> adapt in response to a changing environment (Jackson 2005a, 2).

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[5] Drug cartels and transnational criminal organizations (Kenney 2002; 2003) have been studied as to their organizational learning capability by intelligence analysts and law enforcement officials. Brian Jackson, et al (2005a; 2005b) of the Rand Corporation has extensively studied organizational learning capabilities in various terrorist groups.

Another way of looking at this is that organizational learning refers to the ability of the organization to engage in and make rational decisions. Rational decision making refers to the ability to identify and rank the group's goals or objectives and to identify and rank strategies to achieve those objectives based upon perceived benefits or costs and the calculated probability of success or failure of that strategy. There is a large body of literature that suggests that terrorism is a means to an end and that the use of terrorism is a deliberate and rational choice among several means to an end.[6] Terrorism may be the rational choice in a given situation but in other circumstances, such as a change in political opportunity structures, a terrorist group may rationally choose an alternative means – such as political participation - to achieve its goals. For example, Glenn Robinson (1997, 374) found that the Islamic Action Front made a strategic or rational choice to participate and work within the political processes of Jordan.

The short-term, more volatile non-institutional factors may include significant political or economic events and policy changes which signal to the terrorist group or allow it to determine that it is advantageous to participate in the political process or to change the nature of that political participation. For example, it required a generational and geographic change in leadership in PIRA before the organization was able to see the bigger picture and place its terrorist or military activities in the context of a broader political strategy (Drake 1991, 46; O'Callaghan 1999, 119; and Smith 1997, 154). It may be, as will be shown with the case of Hezbollah, that the achievement of some of a group's original goals forces a re-evaluation of both its goals and the means to achieve those goals.

In sum, certain political opportunity structures create an environment conducive for a terrorist group to participate in the political processes of a country. These include key institutional arrangements and the appearance of some very significant short term, non-institutional factors. The fixed or more permanent institutional features may be described as necessary factors but not sufficient for the terrorist group to decide to participate or to change the nature of that political participation over time. That is contingent upon the presence of sufficient, short term variables.

A Brief History of Hezbollah

Lebanon's political system was born from the patchwork quilt of ethnic and religious groups that make up the country. The consociational democratic electoral system was developed in 1943 with the end of the French mandate. It provides political space for 18 officially recognized ethno-confessional groups to participate in the political process.[7]

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[6] One should see Martha Crenshaw (1998, 7-24) for an explanation of terrorism as a rational or strategic choice. Pape (2005) applies rational or strategic choice to the actions of suicide terrorists. Martin Kramer (1998, 144-48) in an interview with Lebanese Shia cleric Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah outlines the rational logic of the decision by Hezbollah to adopt suicide terrorism as a method in the early 80s and the decision to use alternative methods after 1985.

[7] There are five Muslim groups: Sunni, Shia (Isma'ili and Twelver), Alawi, and Druze. There are 12 Christian groups: Assyrians, Christian Copts, Syriac Catholics, Syriac Orthodox, Chaldeans, Maronites, Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholics, and

The President and the Commander of the Army must be Maronite Christians, the Prime Minister must be a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the Parliament must be a Shia Muslim. The President's Cabinet should have equitable confessional representation and the Parliament must be a 6 to 5 ratio of Christian to Muslim. In 1989 this was changed to 50/50 split.[8] Except for a brief period in 1958 the consociational governing structure provided political stability until 1975. By the mid 1960s a wealthy and very cosmopolitan Beirut was seen as the "Paris of the Middle East."

Yet by the late 1960s, it was clear that demographic changes in Lebanon were not reflected in the "proportional" or power-sharing arrangement in the Lebanese Parliament. Also, growing Muslim dissatisfaction with the failure of the government (Cabinet) led by the Maronites to share economic opportunities throughout Lebanon coupled with the arrival of large numbers of Palestinian refugees in the aftermath of the Six Day War set into motion events leading to civil war. The arrival of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in south Lebanon under Yasser Arafat in 1970 and escalating cycles of cross-border conflicts with Israel exacerbated the situation. Lebanese Muslims became increasingly anti-Israeli/pro-Palestinian and the Lebanese Maronites sided primarily with Israel.

From 1975 until the signing of the Taif Accords in 1989 and the 1992 parliamentary elections Lebanon was engulfed in a violent, destructive, sectarian civil war with external actors such as Syria, Israel, and the PLO playing major roles. Syria, which was initially invited into the country by the Maronite Christians with the hope of ending the conflict, ended up supporting the Muslim community. Syria's interests in Lebanon included the existence of hundreds of thousands of Syrian guest-workers who sent money back to Syria each year, as well as its desire to use Lebanon in its efforts to regain control of the Golan Heights that have been illegally occupied by the Israelis since 1967. Syria remained the primary power broker in Lebanese politics until its military left in 2005. It was during this civil war that Hezbollah, or the Party of God was born. The primary reason for its formation in 1982 was the occupation of southern Lebanon by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) coupled with the fears of a "religiously motivated occupier" (Pape 2005, 130, 136). Thus, its *raison d'être* was to end the occupation of its homeland – Lebanon.

> Although the Lebanese Shia community initially welcomed Israel's decision to eradicate the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] presence [in Lebanon], any Shia euphoria soon developed into resentment and militancy following the realization that Israel would continue to occupy southern Lebanon (Ranstorp 1997, 30).

Evangelicals and smaller Christian sects as one group. A Jewish group is also recognized. An official census has not been taken since 1932 but almost all observers indicate that currently the majority of the population is Muslim.

[8] The standard definition of proportional representation is that each party will receive the percentage of seats in the Parliament equal to the percentage of the popular vote that it received. Lebanon is not a true proportional representative scheme but it does, by law, guarantee Christians 50 percent of the seats and Muslims the other 50 percent of the seats in the Parliament. In that sense the consociational system approximates a proportional representation scheme.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards began training some of the southern Lebanese militias to counter the occupation by the IDF. One of these militias came to be known as the Party of God and began operating as an underground resistance group. It was led by Hussein Musawi, who had broken with the Harakat Amal organization which at the time was the most important Shia organization in Lebanon. Musawi, a more secular Shia leader who was second in command in Harakat Amal, argued that the secular Amal was not only engaging in corruption and political patronage but also collaborating with the Israeli occupation forces (Pape 2005, 130-31; Norton 2007, 23). Hezbollah announced itself to the world in February of 1985 with its "Open Letter to the Downtrodden in Lebanon and the World."

In 1989 it was the moderate, more secular-oriented faction within Hezbollah led by Musawi and backed by trusted and popular Lebanese Shia cleric or *mujtahid* Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah (a *mujtahid* is an authority in Islamic religious law) that won the power struggle with the more religious-oriented Hassan Nasrallah. Musawi advocated acceptance of the Taif Accords which meant a defacto rejection of Hezbollah's call for an Islamic theocracy in Lebanon. At the time Musawi received support from the President of Iran, Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. Musawi was killed by the Israelis in February of 1992 and Nasrallah became the leader of Hezbollah with the support of Ayatollah Khamenei in Iran. He continues to lead the party today.

Hezbollah and several splinter groups such as Islamic Jihad have made extensive use of terrorist actions against those who are viewed or perceived as occupiers - Israel, France, and the US. In its early years, Hezbollah was noted for its use of kidnappings, hostage-taking, hijacking, and suicide attacks. The most notable hijacking was of the Athens to Rome TWA flight in June of 1985. There were more than 100 Americans on board the flight and Hezbollah won the release of more than 700 Shia militia members being held by Israeli security forces. The most notable suicide attack was in Beirut in October 1983 against peacekeepers that resulted in the death of 58 French paratroopers and 241 U.S. Marines. As a result, US troops were withdrawn from Lebanon by President Ronald Reagan in early 1984.[9] In the 1990s Hezbollah began using more guerrilla warfare tactics and engaged IDF military outposts in southern Lebanon. It also began using car-bombs, remotely detonated roadside bombs, and Ketusha rockets against Israeli targets. By 1999 Hezbollah had graduated to the use of TOW (tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided) missiles (Susser 2000, 18). It is clear to most observers, especially in the aftermath of the 2006 summer invasion of Lebanon by Israel, that Hezbollah clearly has a well-trained, well-equipped, modern, full-fledged army. Magnus Ranstorp (1994, 303) sums up the significance of Hezbollah's use of terror in this way:

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[9]According to Pape (2005, 129) it was the success of this suicide bombing that encouraged other terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and the Tamil Tigers to adopt the strategy. The simple fact is that the strategy worked. The U.S. and French withdrew their forces from Lebanese territory. It is interesting to note that the rational logic that guided Hezbollah's decision to use suicide bombers in the early 1980s led to a re-evaluation of the situation and a decision to no longer use the tactic after 1985 (Martin 1998, 144-48).

Hezbollah's use of terrorism has been anything but disorganized or solely Iranian orchestrated. On the contrary, Hezbollah mastery of political violence serves as the basic ingredient in its rapid and calibrated transformation from a small rag-tag revolutionary militia into a major military actor, and since 1992 a political player within post civil-war Lebanon.

Much has been debated and written about the support and direction that it receives from Iran and Syria; however this does not explain Hezbollah's rapid rise and the popular support that it receives within Lebanon. With the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, Hezbollah quickly became an umbrella organization for several existing social groups in the early 1980s – the former Amal group led by Hussein Musawi, the Lebanese Da'wa Party (led by Fadlallah), the Association of Muslim Ulama in Lebanon, and the Association of Muslim Students (Pape 2005, 132). Its growth and popular support increased also due to overt Israeli attempts in 1983 to control politically the villages in southern Lebanon (Norton 1987, 111).[10] It is extremely important to note that Hezbollah also serves to champion the Shia population in southern Lebanon and the suburbs or *dahiya* of south Beirut which have historically been poorer and less politically powerful than other groups in the country.[11] It provides an extensive and efficient social services network consisting of low-cost hospitals, health clinics, discount pharmacies, grocery stores, orphanages, schools, including a school for children with Down's syndrome, garbage collection services, micro-lending via its Benevolent Loan program, youth summer camps, youth soccer leagues, subsidized housing, and the reconstruction of homes and economic infrastructure. Most of these programs are staffed with volunteer labor and are funded from various sources including an extensive expatriate Lebanese Shia network throughout the world, local religious taxes or *zakat*, Iran, and Syria. These activities and programs coupled with its role in resisting foreign occupation have clearly resulted in greater popular support for Hezbollah in southern Beirut and throughout all of southern Lebanon beyond its traditional area of support, the Bekka Valley. Hezbollah also has its own satellite television station, *al-Mannar*, a radio station, *al-Nur*, and various internet websites to get its message out to the public.

For Hezbollah to run candidates for political office, to maintain a military capable of defending against Israeli interventions, and to provide a broad array of social programs and activities it had to develop an efficient and capable organization. A 17-member *Majlis al-Shura* Council is the primary decision-making unit within Hezbollah. It began to meet regularly in May of 1986. In 1989 its organization was changed to include both a political wing governed by a 15-member Politburo and a military wing (known as the Islamic Resistance) largely controlled by regional commanders (Cragin 2005, 38, 45). In

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[10] For an overview of Israeli occupation policies, see Chris Mowles (1986, 1351-66).

[11] Prior to the civil war which began in 1976, the Christian governmental leadership in Lebanon provided little support to the Shia districts. During the 50s and 60s less than 0.7 percent of the government budget went to infrastructure construction and healthcare in districts dominated by the Shia. The Christian community was well educated and worked in business and politics. The Shia were primarily laborers and farmers with very little social mobility. Shia members of parliament in the 50s and 60s were from a handful of powerful families, feudal landlords, who cared little for the vast majority of Shia and controlled them via extensive patronage networks. See Norton (2007, 14) and Moubayed (2006).

terms of Hezbollah's ability to make the transition from terrorist group to legitimate political participant, it is important that the political and military wings are separate. European allies of the US, including Britain, make a distinction between Hezbollah's political wing and its military or security wing and this is perhaps the primary reason for the European Union's decision officially not to declare Hezbollah to be a terrorist organization (Shatz 2004, 10). At this point it is difficult to say conclusively that the political wing controls the military wing and, prior to the July War of 2006, according to Amir Taheri (2006) some in the political wing had expressed their dissatisfaction with Nasrallah's over-reliance on the organization's military and security wing. Nonetheless, once the decision was made in 1992 to pursue the political process as a means to achieving its goals and, as will be shown later in the paper, its ever increasing and deepening involvement in Lebanon's political processes, one can make the argument that the political wing is, at least, as important as the military wing in Hezbollah's organizational structure.

In a study of Hezbollah from 1983 until 2000, Kim Cragin (2005, 37-55) of the Rand Corporation makes the case that the organization matured and engaged in successful "organizational learning." After assuming the leadership in 1992, Nasrallah began modernizing the organizational structure by appointing military commanders on the basis of expertise and competence rather than membership in particular clans or professed supporters of particular Shia clerics (Gambill, 2004). Hezbollah clearly demonstrated a capability for tactical decision making based upon past learning and a rational analysis of changing environmental circumstances. This was witnessed in its selection of its military tactics; the development of its military training programs; the development of logistical operations dealing with securing weapons and financial support from sources outside Lebanon, in particular Iran and Syria; and the ability to improve its own intelligence gathering and operational security. According to Brian Jackson (2005a, ix) organizational learning allows a terrorist group, or as in this case Hezbollah, to "act systematically to fulfill its needs, strengthen its capabilities, and advance its strategic agenda" concerning its future.

The future arrived in May of 2000 with the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon. Hezbollah had now achieved its primary objective. According to Rola El-Husseini this created an "identity crisis" for the organization and that since that time it has been "in search of a role in the region."[12] In other words, it was this event that provided an opportunity or opening for Hezbollah to transform itself again. More recently several other significant events have provided opportunities for Hezbollah to transform itself again. These include the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in February of 2005, the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in April of that year, the election of 14 members of Hezbollah to the Parliament in June of that year, and the brutal Israeli invasion of and withdrawal from Lebanon in the summer of 2006 (the July War).[13]

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[12] Taken from a speech at UCLA by Professor Rola El-Husseini (2007).

[13] Hezbollah is part of the Resistance and Development Bloc which includes Harakat Amal and other minor parties. The bloc elected 35 members to the Lebanese Parliament of which 14 were members of Hezbollah.

Hezbollah once again fought and resisted the Israeli invasion and has taken a primary role in rebuilding the country in the aftermath.

The Changing Nature of Hezbollah's Political Participation

Hezbollah chose to participate in the Lebanese political processes in the country's first post civil war election in 1992. Deputy-head of the party, Sheik Naim Qassem, indicated that the Taif Accords created a new environment, a political opportunity in which Hezbollah had a "duty to participate."[14] According to Lara Deeb (2006) this decision alienated the more "revolution-oriented clerics in the leadership" and "underscored its [Hezbollah's] commitment to working through the existing structure of the Lebanese state, and also shifted the party's focus from a pan-Islamic resistance to Israel toward internal Lebanese politics."[15] Hezbollah changed dramatically with the implementation of the Taif Accords. It no longer insisted upon the imposition of Islamic codes of conduct in the south and worked cooperatively with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).[16] It had eight members elected to the Lebanese Parliament that year. Hezbollah quickly developed a reputation as a "clean" party which differentiates it from most Lebanese political parties who are tainted with overt corruption and extensive use of political patronage. Given Syria's support for Hezbollah, it is interesting to note that its anti-corruption campaign put it at odds with Syria who has traditionally used corruption to control the Lebanese political process and its politicians. Hezbollah served in the loyal opposition also by attacking Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri's lack of government funding provided to the poorer regions of southern Lebanon largely populated by Shia. Hezbollah continued to elect members to the parliament in 1996 and 2000 but it did not participate in the Cabinet. This "middle path" participation allowed it to play the loyal opposition and not be tainted with government corruption (Shanahan 2006). During the 1996 elections Hezbollah emphasized the need to adopt economic policies that address the dire poverty in certain areas of Lebanon – regardless of the sectarian interests involved. It argued that economic support from the government was based upon the extensive sectarian patron-client relationships that had developed and, in effect, simply consolidated the power of elites rather than really addressing the problems of the nation as a whole (Warn 1999). Hezbollah began developing alliances across party and religious lines in professional organizations. It worked closely with Greenpeace of Lebanon to close down a toxic incinerator in south Beirut in 1998. According to Faud Hamdnn of Greenpeace, Hezbollah is "the only party [in Lebanon] with which we had a very positive interaction."[17] In 1999 a coalition of the Lebanese engineering syndicates consisted of members of Hezbollah, the Phalange Party (Christian group) and National Liberation Party (note that both were pro-Israel during the civil war) (Shatz 2004). Continuing its emphasis on anti-patronage, Hezbollah and the anti-Syrian Free National

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[14] Taken from Mats Warn (1999). Warn interviewed Sheik Qassem on October 17, 1994.

[15] At the same time Hezbollah kept its weapons in order to continue to fight the Israeli occupation of the south. This was allowed under the Taif Agreement that ended the civil war and re-established a governing order in Lebanon.

[16] Taken from Matx Warn (1999). Warn interviewed the spokesperson for UNIFIL who witnessed the dramatic change in Hezbollah's interactions with the United Nation forces in the aftermath of the Taif Accords.

[17] Taken from an interview on Common Ground Radio (1998).

Current (FNC) supported the losing candidate for the position of the chair of the
Lebanese Doctor's Association in March of 2001 (Gambill, 2004).
The assassination of Hariri and the subsequent withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon
in 2005 forced Hezbollah to become more deeply involved and entangled in the domestic
political processes. According to Rodger Shanahan (2006) it was no longer able to
pursue a middle path. Without a Syrian presence to prevent the Cabinet from acting
contrary to Hezbollah's interests, it became necessary for it to participate in the Cabinet.
Two Hezbollah members joined the Cabinet after the elections of 2005 and were able to
gain the guarantee of a consensus decision making mechanism in the Cabinet. Although
alliance-building across religious lines by Hezbollah is more common at the local level in
municipal elections and in professional unions, it also began creating political alliances
and flexing its electoral strength at the national level (Shatz 2004). For example, its
endorsement of Druze leader Walid Jamblatt's coalition during the 2005 parliamentary
elections helped Jamblatt defeat General Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement in the
Baabda-Aley district of Mount Lebanon (Shanahan 2006). According to Lebanese
journalist Rami G. Khouri in the aftermath of the July War of 2006, Nasrallah took on

> the veneer of a national leader rather than the head of one group in Lebanon's rich
> mosaic of political parties…In tone and content, his remarks seemed more like
> those of a president or a prime minister should be making while addressing the
> nation after a terrible month of destruction and human suffering…His prominence
> is one of the important political repercussions of this war.[18]

In its public statements Hezbollah leaders often refer to the destruction of Israel as one of
the primary goals of the organization.[19] Yet a closer look at its military actions prior to
2000 indicate that they were mostly focused on ending the IDF occupation of southern
Lebanon and since 2000 its military actions have, for the most part, been limited to small
tactical operations often designed to bring about prisoner exchanges. Indirect talks with
Israel in 1996 and 2004 and its willingness to arrange prisoner exchanges indicate a
growing realism and pragmatism on the part of Hezbollah's leadership.[20] In fact, after the
IDF's *Operation Accountability* in July of 1993 Nasrallah and Israel came to a tacit
agreement on IDF-Hezbollah rules of engagement. Although there were a few noted
violations between 1993 and 2000, according to Gambill (2004) and Deeb (2006) the
agreement basically prohibited Israeli reprisals in "civilian inhabited areas of Lebanon in
exchange for a halt to [Hezbollah] attacks against Israel proper." Noted Hezbollah expert
Augustus R. Norton states that "While Hezbollah's enmity for Israel is not to be

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[18] Quote taken from John Kifner (2006).

[19] It is important to remember that initially Hezbollah supported Israel's move into Lebanon
against the PLO. After the PLO left Lebanon, Hezbollah turned against Israel because the IDF continued to
occupy southern Lebanon for nearly 20 years and Israel attempted to politically control the area. Other
reasons to distrust Israel include that fact that every Christian militia in Lebanon has worked with and been
armed by Israel (and the US for that matter) and the South Lebanese Army worked closely with the Israelis
during the entire occupation. Even after Israel left southern Lebanon in 2000, the United Nations observers
reported 11,984 violations of Lebanese territory by Israelis prior to its summer 2006 invasion (the July
War). See comments by Editor in Chief of the Beruit Daily Star Jamil Mroue (2006).

[20] Argument is made by Lara Deeb (2006).

dismissed; the simple fact is that it has been tacitly negotiating with Israel for years."[21] In interviews with both Seymour Hersh and Adam Shatz, Nasrallah indicated that while he clearly opposes the state of Israel and continues to support Hamas, he would not sabotage what is, in the end, a "Palestinian matter."[22]

Those that reject the idea of Hezbollah's moderation often cite its 1985 "Open Letter" which declares that its goal is to create an Islamic state. But the letter makes it clear that this should occur only through the will of the people and it must not be established by force. With Hezbollah's acceptance of the Taif Agreement, it in effect agreed to give up on its goal of importing Iran's theocratic model of government to Lebanon. Over the years it is clear that Hezbollah has viewed this "goal" in increasingly realistic and pragmatic terms. Husayn Hajj Hassan, a Hezbollah Member of Parliament, stated in a May 1998 interview that

> …Lebanon…is a pluralist society with many faces, where there are Muslims and Christians, among whom there are many different divisions and sects, I don't know of anyone of us who has proposed an Islamic state the Iranian way, or even the Saudi way...in our country, there is a large percent of Christians. We respect their history and we live together at present. We also look forward to the future together. They are our fellowmen. We will build our state together (Warn 1999).

He further indicated that an Islamic state was an "idealistic solution," but that Hezbollah clearly realizes "that it will not be able to achieve its application in Lebanon (Warn 1999)." In a June 1998 interview, the trusted Hezbollah cleric Hussein Fadlallah emphasized that Hezbollah had not proposed any *shar'ia* bills in parliament. He stated that

> Lebanon is a diversified country…It is quite natural that to people who don't believe in Islam, we will not propose any laws of Islam. So the bills proposed by [our] bloc are bills that take into consideration the interests of the people. In Lebanon, it is not possible to propose the *shar'ia* law...so if it is not possible to propose the Islamic *shar'ia*, then we will propose laws which all the people can meet at, things which will achieve justice (Warn 1999).

In an interview in 2004, Nasrallah stated in very realistic terms:

> We believe the requirement for an Islamic state is to have an overwhelming popular desire, and we're not talking about fifty percent plus one, but a large majority. And this is not available in Lebanon and probably never will be (Shatz 2004).

Prior to the 2005 elections Hezbollah sometimes questioned the consociational nature of the Lebanese political system. It argued that the nature of the system created policies that primarily reflected paton-client networks and pointed out that the proportion of Christians

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[21] Norton's quote taken from Lara Deeb (2006).
[22] Quotes of Nasrallah taken from Adam Shatz (2004).

to Muslims in the parliament does not reflect the fact that Muslims make up the majority of the population and that approximately seventy percent of the population is Muslim and forty percent of the population is Shia. But, after the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in April of 2005 and the elections of that year, Hezbollah made it clear that it continues to support the traditional Lebanese consociational democratic representation scheme and consensus decision making requirement in the Cabinet that, for all practical purposes, gives each confessed ethnic or religious group a veto over most policies.[23] This decision, according to Mohammed Ben Jelloun (2007),

> reflects a deep transformation in Hezbollah's understanding of the requirements of the Lebanese political system as well as its appreciation that internal stability is central to every national project if it [Hezbollah] is to succeed…Hezbollah's adherence to the consensus-building principle [demanded by consociational democracy] sees that the majority rule creates an unstable balance of power and is inadequate in the long run to protect the interests of all…

Continuing to show its pragmatism and moderation, in a "Memorandum of Understanding" dated February 6, 2006, Hezbollah has allied with General Michel Aoun's Christian-based and anti-Syrian Free Patriotic Movement to pursue a government of national unity in Lebanon. It stressed the importance of consensual democracy, shared coexistence among the confessional groups in Lebanon, and a new relationship with Syria based upon "parity and the full and mutual respect for the sovereignty and independence of both states."[24]

It is clear that participation in Lebanese politics since 1992 has forced it to moderate its policies and to engage in the give and take of consensus style decision making. It is true that Hezbollah has yet to disarm; that it continues to provide support for Hamas; that it still engages in terrorist activities against Israel, and that it is still opposed to the existence of the state of Israel. Yet, the Hezbollah of today is not the same as the Hezbollah at its founding, or when it first participated in the political processes of Lebanon, or when the IDF left southern Lebanon, or when Syria left Lebanon. These changes can be explained by the changing political opportunity structure.

Hezbollah and Political Opportunity Structures: A Summary

Hezbollah's participation in the political processes of Lebanon has gone through several dramatic phases. The first was from 1982 until 1992 when it did not participate politically largely due to the on-going civil war and the country's absence of a political framework. Between 1989 and 1992 the political opportunity structures in Lebanon changed. The necessary institutional opportunity structures were the re-creation of

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[23] This was publicly stated in Hezbollah's joint statement with General Michel Aoun's Christian-based and anti-Syrian Free Patriotic Movement entitled "Memorandum of Understanding" issued in February of 2006. Lijphart (1977) emphasizes that consensus decision making allows each represented group to have a veto over decisions. This reinforces the move to bring about compromise.

[24] For a full translation of the memorandum of understanding, please see <PDF> retrieved 8/30/07 at http://yalibnan.com/site/archives/2006/02/full_engllish_te.php

Lebanon's consociational political framework, the changing organizational structure of Hezbollah, and the ability of Hezbollah to engage in organizational learning and rational decision-making. The sufficient factors included the winding down of the civil war and the emphasis on national reconciliation with the signing of the Taif Accords. It is clear that the consociational political system gave an opportunity for Hezbollah to participate within the system rather than without. The system not only encourages each confessional group to participate in the political system by guaranteeing them representation in the Parliament, it provides adequate checks and balances which prevent one group from dominating the political process and requires compromise among all groups. By this time Hezbollah's own internal structure had separate military and political wings and its ability to engage in organizational learning and rational decision making was already established. Nasrallah clearly recognized that the benefits of participation outweighed the costs of participating (Shatz 2004). To summarize, the necessary and sufficient political opportunity structures were in place in Lebanon by 1992.

The second phase began after the parliamentary elections in 1992. Lebanon's consociational structure prevented one party from dominating the political process and forced Hezbollah to begin to build alliances across parties and confessional groups and to moderate its policies. From 1992 until 2000 Hezbollah participated in the political processes but chose a less engaged-middle path. This was largely due to the influence of Syria in the Lebanese political system. Syria guaranteed that Hezbollah's interests would be protected, so it was not necessary to participate fully in the Cabinet. This freed it to be a loyal opposition without blame for government failures and corruption. It was during this period that Hezbollah negotiated a code of conduct in terms of its on-going border conflict with Israel and the IDF forces. In 2000 the IDF withdrew from southern Lebanon and Hezbollah had, in effect, achieved its primary military goal. This once again represented a change in the political opportunity structure. It forced a re-evaluation of its objectives and the nature of its political participation.

The third phase of Hezbollah's political participation was from 2000 until 2005. There was a qualitative expansion in the nature of its political participation even though it continued not to participate in the Cabinet. Hezbollah came to focus more on the internal politics of Lebanon engaging in the give and take of alliance building and goal seeking. It came to state publicly that its goal of creating an Islamic state in Lebanon was neither possible nor desirable and that it would, in the end, recognize a Palestinian decision concerning its future with Israel. In 2005 the political opportunity structure in Lebanon changed dramatically with the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri and the withdrawal of Syrian troops.

Since 2005 Hezbollah has dramatically deepened its political involvement and is a complete and full participant in the Lebanese political system including the Cabinet and alliances with major Christian groups in the country. With the Syrian withdrawal, Hezbollah no longer had a protector within the Lebanese political system and the decision was made that it must become a full participant in the political system. More recently with the Israeli invasion and retreat (the July War) in 2006, Hezbollah has been thrust into a national leadership role with its popular support growing.

Conclusions and Future Study

This brief look at Hezbollah raises more questions than it answers and invites qualified comparisons with other terrorist groups who are making the transition to a legitimate political party. It is clear that institutional factors such as the consociational political system, the complex organizational structure of Hezbollah, and its ability to make strategic and rational decisions provided the necessary political structures for participation. It is also clear that key non-institutional factors such as the IDF withdrawal in 2000 and Syrian withdrawal in 2005 led to a more involved participation in the give and take of consociational politics in Lebanon. These more fluid, contextual factors created the sufficient political opportunities for a qualitative change in its political participation. Thus, the study clearly relates changes in the political opportunity structures to qualitative changes in Hezbollah's political participation.

One should note that the primary purpose of a case study is to generate hypotheses for future comparative study. One should compare the political opportunity structures that help explain Hezbollah's decision to participate and the qualitative changes in that participation with other terrorist groups. This, however, does present some theoretical and operational research problems. The institutional, necessary factors that have been identified can easily be tested for comparative purposes but the sufficient, non-institutional or contextual factors will differ based upon the country involved. Comparisons of the sufficient factors will be problematic at best. One question one may also ask is, is Hezbollah different from other terrorist groups? One could argue that it is because it does not commit acts of terror against the Lebanese government. The PIRA committed its acts of terror against its governing authority – Great Britain. The primary reason for Egypt declaring the Muslim Brotherhood to be illegal is its history of terrorism against the government. If Hezbollah is sufficiently different in this respect one may question its comparability with other terrorist groups. Nonetheless, this brief study of Hezbollah does raise enough questions and provide the opportunity for comparative studies of an extremely important political phenomenon – the role of changing political opportunity structures in the transformation process from terrorist group to legitimate political participant.[25]

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