

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

HEZBOLLAH AND ISRAEL: NORMS, EXCEPTIONS, AND
GAME THEORY

by
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for the degree of Master of Arts
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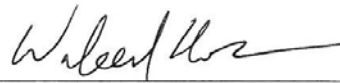
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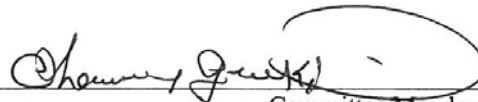
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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The enduring conflict between Hezbollah and Israel dates back to the year 1982, when Israel conducted its operation *Peace for Galilee* that resulted in the siege of the Lebanese capital, Beirut. In 1992, Hezbollah became the sole group in Lebanon to engage in operations against Israel. This thesis will attempt to present this conflict as an application of Game Theory, arguing that from 1992 till the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, the Deterrence model governed the conflict, whereas after the withdrawal, the Spiral Model was set in place. During the Deterrence phase, Hezbollah and Israel engaged in an ‘*eye for an eye*’ conduct where each operation was followed by a counter-operation of the same intensity. However, during the Spiral phase, the situation between Hezbollah was much calmer and both belligerents engaged in an arms race. Based on the Deterrence and the Spiral models and the games they represent (the Chicken Game and the Prisoners’ Dilemma respectively), the conflict developed according to rational patterns that follow a strategic logic. As a result, the conflict will be presented within the prism of norms and exceptions, demonstrating that counterpart behavior has been surprisingly stable, confined within the established framework. In fact, the conflict between these two entities developed from inception according to a special set of norms which are still in place to date. First and foremost, it is by nature a conflict between a non-state actor (Hezbollah) and a state actor (Israel). This does not mean that the state of Lebanon has a different view of Israel (it is still considered an “enemy” of the state) but it was Hezbollah that was enabled (and in many ways encouraged) to conduct military operations as a popular resistance while marginalizing the role of the Lebanese army in that arena. This point is crucial inasmuch as it underlines the Lebanese state’s condoning of military resistance without making it an official act of state aggression, thus creating a buffer on the international stage. Second, the military operations that both entities conducted were designed in such a way so as not to trigger an escalation that would lead to full-scale wars. Third, geographically the conflict was mainly limited to Lebanese areas with Israeli presence. However and as is commonly the case, these norms have some exceptions. These exceptions were in fact the three wars that erupted during the years of the conflict and during which both parties behaved differently than they usually do, effectively diverging from the normative path established over time. Moreover, using a structural analysis of the conflict shows that the drivers and strains behind these exceptions or “divergences” symbolize the breakdown of the framework. Going forward, while the framework of the study does allow the reader to discern a narrower band of potential evolution of the conflict, the future will eventually hinge to a large extent on the domestic, regional, international contexts over years to come.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, one of the most remarkable and long-standing of all Arab-Israeli conflicts, was and still remains a fixture on the geopolitical agenda of the Middle East. A wealth of articles, reports, studies, and books have been written about this subject, tackling different aspects of the conflict and approaching it through a plethora of different angles, thus making the unbiased examination of those players a challenging task. Lebanon has been affected on all levels by the dynamics of this conflict; and as years passed, the situation never ceased to increase in complexity, with growing scale, geopolitical involvement and internal fractionation over the issue infiltrating social, economic and political spheres of the country. Hezbollah as an independent entity was first implicated in the conflict with Israel in 1982, when Israel launched its operation *Peace for Galilee* in Lebanon that resulted in the occupation of the Lebanese capital Beirut. This acted as the trigger that led to the formation of Hezbollah as a party with the priority and in many ways sole purpose (at its inception at least) of fighting the Israeli occupation.

The lenses through which this conflict could be examined are numerous since both Hezbollah (and as a matter of fact Lebanon) and Israel were and still are affected on all levels by the repercussions and the consequences of this ongoing conflict. However, this paper will attempt to stray away from the beaten path. It will neither provide a study of each of the players independently, nor will it explore events that have marked the evolution of the conflict without acknowledging their interrelationships. Rather, it will attempt to study a particular period of time while following the common strings or inter-linkages between the events that were of high significance for the development of the conflict.

In order to build an analytical framework for the conflict and to gain a better understanding of its dynamics, the author will argue that the conflict can be best understood through the prism of Game Theory and player interaction. In fact, the conflict has been governed by two phases: 1) “*Deterrence*” phase which resembles a Chicken Game¹ from 1992 until 2000 and the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and 2), a “Spiral Model” phase, which resembles a Prisoners’ Dilemma game² from 2000 and until 2006, thereby replacing the Deterrence model. These models and game theoretical applications will better illustrate the evolution of the conflict and will also enable the readers to better understand its dynamics, establishing a logical progression amid seemingly chaotic events. In other words, the models applied have specific rules that identify them, and once the conflict is represented as an application of these models, one will be enabled to understand why at a certain point the conflict diverged from the norms that govern it and devolved into a full-scale war. Moreover, these models illustrate how both belligerents behave at different time, how they perceive cooperation between them as well as how they chose to stop cooperating.

Furthermore, the author will present the conflict within the prism of norms and exceptions. In fact, from 1992 and until 2006, the conflict was governed by three norms by which both Hezbollah and Israel abided.

The first norm is that the conflict was between a state actor (Israel) and a non-state actor (Hezbollah). This does not mean that the government of Lebanon did not agree on the operations of Hezbollah, as in many ways it condoned them implicitly, but rather it established a buffer, characterized by implicit support for armed resistance without the downward risk of this being interpreted on the international stage as an outright act of state aggression. This approach thus required bypassing the involvement of the Lebanese army and

¹ Robert Jervis, *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 50.

² *Ibid.*, 62.

the task was therefore mainly accorded to Hezbollah which was a highly organized, externally funded (not state-sponsored) faction and operated in familiar terrain in South Lebanon.

The second norm is that the operations that both entities conducted against each other throughout the period of time under study were aimed towards incurring proportional harm but while remaining mindful of avoiding widespread escalation of the intensity of the conflict to levels of a full-scale war. Hezbollah and Israel engaged in ‘*eye for an eye*’ military operations by which each player would respond with approximately the same intensity to the enemy’s attack, a proportional response.

Finally, the third norm is that the operations of Hezbollah were mainly restricted to the Lebanese occupied areas where the troops of the Israeli Army or those of the South Army of Lebanon (which was backed by Israel) were present. This area has mostly been the “Security Zone” that Israel created after its retreat from Lebanon after the end of the operation *Peace for Galilee* to secure its lands from the attacks of Palestinian and Lebanese military groups present in Lebanon at the time. Some operations occurred outside the Security Zone but they are marginal in comparison to those that occurred inside this zone. Hezbollah also adopted a strategy of launching rockets against Israeli villages but this was used only sparsely and uniquely when Israel’s operation(s) targeted citizens in South Lebanon. The third and current Secretary General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah explained during a televised interview that this policy had been adopted only in certain cases in order not to over-use it and thus lose its value as a deterrence tool against the attacks of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).³ Throughout the thesis and for purpose of simplification, the author

³ Interview with Hezbollah’s Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in the documentary “The Lebanese Parties” published by the Sabbah Media Company, 2004. Accessed November 2, 2013.

will refer to the periods of time where the aforementioned norms were abided by as the 'Norms-Mode'.

However, the author will argue that along these norms there were periods of time where Hezbollah and Israel did not abide by those norms. These periods will be considered as exceptions. These exceptions are in fact the three wars that occurred between the year 1992 and 2006. During the wars of 1993, 1996, and 2006, Hezbollah and Israel stopped abiding by the norms stated above and the conflict rapidly escalated out of proportions. For instance, weapons that were/are deemed too impactful to be used during norms-mode were used extensively during these conflict spikes. Hezbollah for instance introduced medium-range rockets during the war of 2006 to target cities never targeted before such as the city of Haifa.⁴ Furthermore, during these wars Israel did not limit its operations to Hezbollah targets. The Lebanese Army was targeted as well as core infrastructure such as electricity plants and main bridges in Lebanon.

The choice of the period of time that ranges from 1992 till 2006, more precisely from the election of Hassan Nasrallah as Secretary General of the Hezbollah until the few months in the aftermath of the July War of 2006 is a result of several factors. These have more to do with Hezbollah than with Israel but this is only due to the fact that Israel exists since 1948 and has functioned as a fully-fledged state ever since, whereas Hezbollah is a non-state actor that has evolved through many stages from its infancy to the scale, hierarchy, organization and breadth of reach that characterize it and that it is known for today. Thus, the choice of the time period was mainly based on the years during which Hezbollah had already emerged as a full political and military player on the Lebanese and regional scene and this in order to be able to study at full the most important years of the conflict which build up to the current

⁴ "Civilian under Assault: Hezbollah's Rockets on Israel in the 2006 War: Summary," Human Rights Watch, accessed February 2, 2014.
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/iopt0807/2.htm>.

dynamic rather than dwelling on Hezbollah's internal evolution insomuch as it impacted Israel. In fact, the year 1992 was of great importance to Hezbollah and would come to be a turning point in its evolution. First, during that year, Hassan Nasrallah, was elected as the third Secretary General of the party after the assassination of Abbas Moussawi, a position he still holds, with more tenacity and clout than ever.⁵ Moreover, in 1992, Lebanon held its first parliamentary elections after the end of civil war and in which Hezbollah participated after a long debate among its leading members⁶, thus becoming an active political player on the Lebanese scene rather than a purely military faction. Finally, by then the Lebanese civil war had already been over for nearly three years ago and Hezbollah was the only remaining Lebanese faction that did not surrender its weapons to the Lebanese government under the guise (and largely under the political cover of the Syrian regime) that it is not a militia but rather a resistance group against Israel.

The thesis will be divided into different chapters, each one tackling one of the author's main arguments. Chapter 2 of this thesis will go over the literature review of this topic. Various sources have been consulted that treat the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel from different viewpoints, and to each a value in illuminating the nuances surrounding the topic. In addition to books, the author had to refer academic journals that published articles regarding the subject. Even more, the author explored many websites, especially news websites for the purpose of collection of data related to specific incidents that took place between Hezbollah and Israel. Press conferences, televised interviews, and public speeches were a great source of information during this conflict; they were great tools to diffuse messages from the part of the leaders of both entities and thus provide as much color, if not more, than densely researched yet outdated academic papers. Chapter 3 will build the

⁵ Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 99.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 101-102.

theoretical framework by tackling the notions of game theories and models and will attempt to apply them to the conflict. The author will show how the conflict shifted from the Deterrence Model which governed the conflict from 1992 until the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 to the Spiral Model that started to be applied after May 25, 2000. The indicators of each model will be presented as well as their presence in each phase of the conflict. Chapter 4 will build upon this theoretical framework to then explore the norms that governed the conflict from 1992 till 2006, in other words what the “rules of the games” were. The author will present the norms and provide the requisite data to support his argument which will mainly take the form of incidents that show how these norms were applied as well as speeches and public stances that back up this framework. Chapter 5 will cover the domestic, regional, and international contexts of the exceptions which made their occurrence more likely. Chapter 6 will tackle the three exceptions and the causes that led to their occurrence. These are the three wars of 1993 (Operation Accountability), 1996 (Operation Grapes of Wrath), and 2006 (The July War or Lebanon Second War). The author will provide evidence supporting how Hezbollah and Israel unilaterally violated the norms during these wars and how in each war new weapons and new tactics were introduced. When it comes to the causes of war, the author will mainly rely on Stephen Van Evera’s *Causes Of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* to explain what factors led Hezbollah and Israel to move into full-scale wars in 1993, 1996, and 2006. Each cause will be presented separately along with the evidence that apply to each, respectively. Finally chapter 7 will revolve around the presentation of possible future scenarios of the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel based on their history and the evolution of the conflict dynamics and actions of both belligerents. The conclusion will wrap up the thesis, summarize the main arguments and present the author’s main perception of the relation between Hezbollah and Israel both in the past, present and going forward.

CHAPTER II

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

A considerable amount of books and articles have been written about the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel. The literature covered a wide range of issues surrounding the conflict. The present literature review will list some of the most important sources that have been consulted and that helped the author frame the problem under study. A list of the whole bibliography figures can be found at the end of this document.

For a historical background of Hezbollah and Israel, a list of books was explored. *Hezbollah, The Story from Within*, the book written by Naim Qassem, the deputy secretary general of Hezbollah, was consulted because of the information it presents about the history of Hezbollah and the different stages it went through. This book presented the history of Hezbollah since its creation in 1982 and presented the main events that marked its evolution. Moreover, it tackled the ideology of Hezbollah, its stance vis-à-vis many issues, and presented a projection on the future of Hezbollah, valuable inasmuch as it presents the “public-facing” objectives and perspective of the party going forward (thus affecting public perception). The author also presented detailed information regarding the wars of 1993 and 1996 as well as the withdrawal of 2000. Thus, this book will contribute more in terms of information regarding the context and the environment of the conflict.

Another source that was consulted was Avi Shlaim’s *The Iron Wall*. This book was chosen because of its great contribution concerning the history of Israel and its relationship with the Arab world. The book covers the relationship between Israel and the Arab world since 1947 until 1998. Shlaim argues that the doctrine that Israel adopted during most of the years of the conflict was an Iron Wall doctrine that Israel erected to secure itself from the Arab world. Only a small part of the book covers the period covered by the thesis but it is still important

since it explores the internal dynamics of Israel during these years of the conflict as well as the relationship of Israel with its Arab neighbors.

The article “The Iron Wall Revisited” by Shlaim was also explored since it is an updated version of the book. The article was published in 2012 and besides being a summary of the original book it was extended to include more recent events that marked the state of Israel. The two major events were the July war in 2006 against Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Gaza war of 2008. The article was valuable since it approaches the issue from a theoretical point of view, in particular the ideology that is adopted by the Israeli government to face the challenges that it encounters. The article will be used to help illustrate the theoretical context that governed Israel in the recent years especially after the withdrawal of 2000.

The following list of books contributed more in the design of the norms-exceptions framework. Augustus Richard Norton’s book *Hezbollah: A Short History* was a valuable source of information about Hezbollah. In this book, Norton presented an overview of the party covering various important periods of the evolution of Hezbollah. He also discussed some information concerning the rules of engagement between Hezbollah and Israel. In fact, it was in the Chapter 4 of the book that Norton clearly discusses the rules of engagement between Hezbollah and Israel. He argues that during the 1990’s the rules were that Israel would not attack the civilians in Lebanon and Hezbollah would only focus on the security zone to conduct its operations. Later in the 1990’s the rules of the games allowed indirect talks for prisoners and bodies exchange. One gap in this book is that it does not explore the 2006 war in details.

An interesting book that was also consulted was *Hezbollah, The Changing Face of Terrorism* by Judith Palmer Harik. Here also the author explored other dimensions of the relationship between the two entities. The author studied how Hezbollah changed from being

a radical militia to become a mainstream party. Palmer also discussed the decision of Hezbollah to participate in the parliamentary elections of 1992 and thus abiding by the local Lebanese rules of the game. In addition, the withdrawal of Israel in 2000 was explored and the outcome that resulted was the Hezbollah switch towards what the author calls the “Low-Tech methods of warfare”. Another dimension that the author explored is the position of the Lebanese government and what this meant to Hezbollah. Besides the regular military rules, Palmer explores other issues such as the water conflict between Israel and Lebanon and the role of Hezbollah in it.

One of the rare authors to have studied the rules of engagement between Hezbollah and Israel was Daniel Sobelman in his paper *New Rules of the Game, Israel and Hizbollah after the withdrawal from Lebanon* published in January 2004. In fact the paper is a lengthy piece in which Sobelman explores the relation between Hezbollah and Israel after the withdrawal from Lebanon that took place in May 2000. The paper is composed of many parts, however only two of them are directly related to the rules of the game and the environment in which they were applied. Chapter 4 of the paper is entitled “Four Major Junctures since the Withdrawal”. In this chapter, Sobelman argues that four major junctures impacted Hezbollah after the withdrawal in 2000 and they determined the way the party acted during this period. The first major juncture was the death of the Syrian president Hafez Al Assad and the election of his son Bashar to succeed him. According to Sobelman, the Hezbollah leader Nasrallah enjoyed a warm relationship with the Syrian president and regular meetings were held between the two persons. This relationship was translated into more cooperation between Hezbollah and Syria, especially in the issue of arms and long-range rockets transfer. However, the author also points out that Syria was not always pleased with Hezbollah actions especially when it came to the operations of the party on the Israeli northern front, which led many times to the interference of the Syrian president to try to bring back the relationship to

its normal mode. The second juncture that affected Hezbollah was the return of Rafiq Hariri as Prime Minister in October 2000. Sobelman argues that the relationship between the Lebanese PM and Hezbollah was a tense one because of the divergent views that each had regarding the struggle with Israel. While the two agreed on the matter that Israel is an enemy of the state, Hariri believed in diplomacy to settle the struggle and was generally against the operations that Hezbollah conducted because of the high cost that they had on Lebanon's economy. The third juncture was the Aqsa Intifada in September 2000. Sobelman argues that Hezbollah benefitted from the Intifada to criticize Arab regimes for their weak stances towards the events going in Israel. Moreover, Hezbollah benefitted from the Intifada since it indirectly meant that Israel was not going to launch any attack on the party since it was preoccupied with the events taking place internally. The fourth and last juncture was the September 11 attacks that shook the USA. The events had their repercussions on Hezbollah especially after the US administration launched its War on Terror and definitely Hezbollah felt that it was even more prominently in the crosshairs of the US-Israel nexus than ever before.

The second important part of the paper is chapter 5 entitled "The Rules of the Game". Sobelman argues that three rules governed the military struggle between Hezbollah and Israel. The first rule was the unofficial acknowledgment of the Blue Line by Hezbollah. The second rule was the acknowledgment of the Shebaa farms as the only scene for the party's operations. The third rule is what Sobelman calls the "eye for an eye" in which Hezbollah responds to any Israeli attack by any means it considers necessary. The author explores an important new tactic that was used by Hezbollah, the anti-aircrafts missiles. In fact, he presents a detailed table in which he shows all the Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace and the numbers of days in which Hezbollah responded by launching anti-aircrafts missiles. In

addition, Sobelman gives many other examples to prove his rule, for example attacks launched by Hezbollah and directed towards patrols of the IDF.

In fact, Sobelman is one of very few authors that have written about norms that explicitly in addition of presenting a regional and international context. However, the piece only covers the period after the withdrawal, not what happened before it and not the July War of 2006, an event greater in scale and impact than those covered by Sobelman in the history of the struggle between Hezbollah and Israel, which would have likely provided a welcome added depth to the analysis of aforementioned observations. Moreover, Sobelman presented in some cases only the position of Hezbollah and did not compare it to Israel's position, leaving the analysis one-dimensional.

Likewise, Brigadier General Ret. Elias Hanna's piece entitled *Lessons Learned from the Recent War in Lebanon* published in 2007 was also very helpful in understanding the dynamics of the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel but this time while focusing on the July War of 2006. While Hanna did not explore the rules that governed this war like Sobelman, he presented a detailed study of the context of the war and the repercussions it had on Hezbollah, Israel, and the Arab countries. The paper focused more on the position of Hezbollah in this war, especially in terms of its preparation for all possible scenarios and the way the party organized its guerilla warfare while facing an unprepared enemy. Thus, this paper was of great importance while reviewing the literature for this thesis, mainly because it presented a military and strategic analysis of the most recent altercation between Hezbollah and Israel. The gap in this paper however, was that it did not present the rules that were applied in the conflict as well as the type of weapons used by the belligerents. The thesis will try to fill this gap and to build upon the analysis that was presented by Hanna in order to come up with a clear set of the rules that determined the July War of 2006.

Another source that was more directed into the military side of the conflict was the paper

entitled *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy* by Stephen Biddle and Jeffrey A. Friedman published in 2008. In this paper, the authors argue that during the July War of 2006, Hezbollah fought more like a state actor in terms of military tactics. This is not to say that the party totally abandoned the guerilla warfare tactics, but the July War showed many modifications in the way Hezbollah used to conduct its operations against Israel. The paper is a lengthy piece where the authors present very detailed and very technical information concerning the behavior of Hezbollah during the war of 2006. Thus, this piece will serve as a very important source when it comes to identifying the military rules that were applied during this war. The authors studied six factors that characterized the tactics of Hezbollah: the duration of firefights, the proximity of attackers to defenders, the incidence of counterattack, the incidence of harassing fires and unattended minefields, the proximity of combatants to civilians, and the use of uniforms to distinguish combatants from civilians. Biddle and Friedman also explore the theatre of operations and the importance it had in determining the course of the war. This piece offers great information for the thesis since it is one of the rare pieces that explore the military aspect of the confrontation in details and thus helping in building the rules that were applied.

John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt's *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* provided valuable insight, especially concerning the July War of 2006. The purpose of the book is not to study the relationship between Hezbollah and Israel but in the Chapter 11, the authors explored the role of the Israeli Lobby in backing up the War against Lebanon in 2006. Thus, this book mainly served as a source when discussing the role of international factors in the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel. Moreover, this chapter presented some interesting statistical data that could be used while exploring the Lebanese internal dynamics after the year 2000.

Stephen Van Evera's *Causes of War* was also a great source for understanding possible reasons that lead powers to go into war. In this book, Van Evera presents causes that make wars more probable. First of all, he argues that "False Optimism" can be a great cause of war. False optimism occurs when a power believes that the war to be waged will be won and with a low cost. Another cause of war according to Van Evera is what he calls "Jumping the Gun". In this case, the aggressor believes that he has an advantage if he is the one making the first move. A third cause of war is the "Power Shifts". In this case, the aggressor believes that it is better to wage a war now than later. The aggressor seeks a power shift to his favor by attacking now, since he believes that attacking later would not yield the same outcome. Another cause for war is "Cumulative Resources". That is when an aggressor believes that war would lead him to protect or acquire more resources.

Van Evera's work helped a lot in understanding the causes that led to the three exceptions in 1993, 1996, and 2006. The author argues that False Optimism, Jumping the Gun, Power Shifts, and Cumulative Resources provided the main theoretical similarities to the drivers behind these wars.

Data concerning the daily events of the wars of 1993, 1996 and 2006 was collected after reviewing the archives of newspapers and TV stations. Also, the press conferences and reports that have been issued regarding these wars were consulted since they offered specific information and primary data often left out of traditional commentary and academic publications. The period ranging from the withdrawal in 2000 and 2006 and the main events that erupted during were also explored using media archives.

More documents that include the archives of newspapers and TV stations as well as books, articles, and academic papers were used in providing context, depth and detail to the analysis, and served to ensure accuracy of primary sources since data and commentary surrounding Hezbollah is often based on opaque sources.

CHAPTER III

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND ITS APPLICATION IN THE CONFLICT

The Theoretical Basis: Game Theory and Cooperation Games

Robert Jervis' *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* provided a great contribution in terms of the game theory part of this thesis. In fact, in the third chapter of his book, Jervis explore the deterrence and the spiral models in great detail, allowing the author to derive correlations between the theoretical underpinnings and real-world manifestations of similar phenomena. He argues that in the deterrence model, the danger is greater when an aggressor believes that the status quo power is weak. Thus, in this model, the powers will always display readiness to wage wars and to respond to any act from the part of the aggressor since failing to do so will lead the aggressor to launch an attack and thus forcing the status quo power to end up making concessions. In the deterrence model, moderation is considered to be a sign of weakness and is avoided since the aggressor would take advantage and try to change the status quo to his favor, a view which aligns with Jervis's neorealist stances on the importance of relative power in international relations. However, if any sign of moderation is to be shown, the player should make sure the other does no conceive it as weakness or incapability to wage war. Therefore, the core idea of the deterrence model is that the player should make the cost of war high and the probability for the aggressor to win low in order to deter the latter from waging an attack. Moreover, Jervis argues that in the deterrence model, the players are actually in the Chicken game, a simplified game symbolizing hostile players' behavior, where two drivers are driving towards each other and if none of them swerve, they will both end up crashing. The player who swerves will be called a chicken.

In contrast, the spiral model is a model where the idea of an anarchical world reigns and thus each power should be strong enough in order to defend itself from threats. This model is characterized by the security dilemma where each power accumulates weapons in order to be ready to any attack; however, this leads the enemy to feel less secure and will end accumulating weapons himself to counterbalance the other power. The vicious cycle goes on and each player accumulates more power. Therefore, arms race is a characteristic of this model. Moreover, in the spiral model, acts of aggression can take place when one of the players feels threatened by another strong player, and the arms that were accumulated for the purpose of defense can be used to launch an attack. In terms of Game Theory, the Spiral Model resembles the Prisoners' Dilemma game.⁷ The basic idea behind this game is that two thieves are in two different cells without the possibility of them communicating. For simplification reasons, a prisoner remaining silent during his investigation would be described as cooperating, while a prisoner who accuses the other of committing the crime would be labeled as defecting. The prisoners are investigated separately. If one defects and accuses the other of committing the crime and the other does not reciprocate, the one who remained silent will be imprisoned and the other will be set free. If both remain silent and thus cooperate, they will both be imprisoned for a certain period of time. If both defect, they will both be imprisoned but for a longer period of time. The last two points illustrate the nature of the dilemma. In such a game, a rational choice would be to choose to defect since it is in the self-interest for each prisoner to be set free. However, if each prisoner behaved rationally and followed that logic, they would both end up yielding the worst possible outcome, which is to be imprisoned for the longest period of time. Thus, cooperating both of them and remaining silent seems to be the best choice to make. In single-play prisoners' dilemma, defecting is the dominant strategy. But in iterated (multi-play) prisoners' dilemma games,

⁷ Jervis, *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics*, 67.

players are more likely to cooperate. This is the dynamic that governs the dilemma and make cooperation the best choice to make in order to yield the best outcome for both prisoners. The prisoner dilemma is often represented in terms of a matrix and various payoffs: when one prisoner cooperates and the other defects, this is the “sucker payoff”, when both cooperate it is called the “trust payoff”, and finally when both defect it is called the “nasty payoff.”⁸

Applying the Theoretical Framework to the Hezbollah-Israel Conflict

These models in the author’s opinion near-perfectly illustrate the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel. While the deterrence model characterizes the period ranging from 1992 until the Israeli withdrawal in May 2000, the conflict dynamic interestingly shifted towards the spiral model after the withdrawal. In fact, game theory will enable readers to not only see how both entities acted during the period studied, but also attempt to understand how this conflict could evolve in the future and what the possible outcomes to end such conflict, especially that many of the conditions which have triggered breakdowns in the past have been largely unpredictably and circumstantial rather than structural. As such, inserting a structural framework to the study would allow understanding how the different factors and drivers fit together and interestingly how a seemingly similar historical pattern of attack/resistance has actually showed a noticeable shift over time.

From 1992 till 2000, each player was interested in showing the other that it is not weak and is ready to wage war or defend itself at any time. The “Chicken game” was played over and over again, and two clashes occurred in 1993 and 1996 when none of the drivers (in this case Hezbollah and Israel) swerved. However, after the withdrawal, the author posits the dynamics changed and the spiral model replaced the deterrence model. The conflict was much more calculated in terms of military activities and both players engaged in the arms race. One

⁸ Robert V. Dodge, *Schelling’s Game Theory: How to Make Decision*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 141.

could argue that each player realized that cooperation (or in other words unthreatened coexistence, ironically, in this case) would benefit players more than engaging in endless wars: Israel would have an enemy who knows well the norms and keep the borders calm borders while Hezbollah would have a reason to keep and justify its weapons internally and its armed presence in South Lebanon. The July War was the exception during the time period that followed the Israeli withdrawal where Israel believed it was the right time to get rid of Hezbollah. After the war ended, the spiral model seems to have been reapplied but with more conviction in the necessity of cooperation.

A. The Deterrence Model

The period ranging between 1992 and 2000 can be best seen as governed by the deterrence model. This model witnessed the first two exceptions: the war of 1993 and the war of 1996. Robert Jervis argues that within this type of model “the state must often go to extremes because moderation and conciliation are to be taken for weakness.”⁹ In other words, Israel, by brutally replying to Hezbollah’s attacks, wanted to prove to the party that it is still the strongest player and there will be no tolerance of the party undermining the IDF’s ascendancy. Moreover, this can explain the fact that during eight years Hezbollah and Israel fought two wars, unlike the period that followed the Israeli withdrawal which witnessed only one major war (the 2006 war) in 14 years. In fact, when in deterrence model, if the defender shows firmness in responding to the attack, this can check the aggressor from attacking.¹⁰ Jervis refers to a speech by the former Secretary General of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev when he explains his idea. Khrushchev illustrated the aggressor as a bandit trying to steal one’s purse. If the defender gives up, then the burglar will ask for more items.

⁹ Jervis, *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics*, 59.

¹⁰ Ibid. , 60.

In contrast, if the defender resists, the bandit will back off.¹¹ This is exactly what Hezbollah did from 1992 till 2000. The party would test Israel's reaction to its attack. If Israel did not reply, the party would increase the strength of its operations. However, when Israel responds firmly, the party would not go further in escalation. A search for a *modus vivendi* (an agreement between those whose opinions differ) also characterizes the deterrence model.¹² In 1993 it was the unwritten agreement, and in 1996 it was the April Understanding that ended the war without putting a final end to the conflict. That it how Hezbollah managed to survive these two attacks by standing still until a concession was made.

Going back to game theory, the deterrence model resembles a Chicken Game where two drivers are moving towards each other at full speed.¹³ The Chicken between them is the one who swerves to avoid the clash. If neither swerves, a clash will occur and none of them will win. Further explored, there are four possible outcomes for a chicken game: the best outcome being that if one is driving, continues driving straight and his counterpart swerves (the one swerving is the chicken), the next best outcome is when both of them swerve, both of them are chickens. The "chicken" denomination symbolizes the perception of strength by different parties; the chicken is seen as inferior because of swerving. The next-to-worst outcome is when one swerves and the counterpart does not; thus becoming the chicken. Although no breakdown will occur in this scenario, a signal will be sent to the counterpart that did not swerve that he has ascendancy, and hence better relative standing. Finally, the worst outcome is when both do not swerve and thus crash and both die, symbolizing a breakdown.¹⁴

Therefore, the rational thing to do is to swerve in order to stay alive, while expecting the other to do the same. Nevertheless, if one of the drivers believes that the other would swerve with a degree of certainty (whether anchored in new intelligence, regional assurances,

¹¹ Ibid. , 61.

¹² Ibid. , 59.

¹³ Ibid. , 61.

¹⁴ Dodge, *Schelling's Game Theory: How to Make Decisions*, 76.

etc....), then it is possible for that player to decide to gamble with staying the course. It is in this case where things start to be interesting and the game is applied. The debate about whether a driver should swerve becomes one of perception, where the slightest miscalculation of the relative standing and opponent's resolve could result in a breakdown and fiery crash.

These are the outcomes that were available to Hezbollah and Israel under the deterrence model. During those years, Hezbollah engaged in hundreds of military operations of all types against Israeli troops and Israel replied in a similar manner. Similarly, Israel attacked Hezbollah and the party replied by generally proportional retaliatory attacks. All of this happened within the norms. No escalation ever happened. Using the Game Theory vocabulary, each time, one of the belligerents played the role of the Chicken (sometimes both of them did) in order not to escalate the situation. Nevertheless, the crash took place twice when none of the drivers swerved. The result was a divergence from the norms; the two exceptions took place and the wars of 1993 and 1996 were fought.

Thomas Schelling develops the notion of Chicken Game more deeply. He argues that a Chicken Game needs "two not to play" unlike all others games which need two to play; in fact "If you are publicly invited to play chicken and say you would rather not, you have just played."¹⁵ By applying this description to the Hezbollah-Israel conflict, one can argue that both parties have been playing this game extensively from 1992 till 2000; each time one of the players attacked the other and the other refused to escalate and go into a full-scale war, they were actually playing the game and each one of them was the chicken alternatingly. However, during the two exceptions of 1993 and 1996, and just by the fact of going into full-scale war, Hezbollah and Israel did not swerve and the confrontation ended up in the crash of the two drivers of the Chicken Game. In other terms, in order for a game to exist, one should

¹⁵ Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University, 1966), 118.

swerve in face of the other, and this is exactly what happened when things were governed by the norms throughout the years ranging from 1992 to 2000, with the exceptions of the wars of 1993 and 1996. Schelling also argues about a sort of cooperation when both parties decline to play the game, this happens when “both players can appreciate a rule that forbids play.”¹⁶ This sort of cooperation is present in order to remain within the acknowledged norms of the conflict.

Another interesting part of the Chicken Game is how the cooperation and the antagonism present in it are approached.¹⁷ The opponents of Hezbollah have long used this issue against it, and the party has always been accused of being a ‘borders guard’ to Israel. This is not exactly the case. In fact, it is the game itself that make the players look as if they are in full cooperation, however one should never neglect the presence of antagonism between Hezbollah and Israel. History itself is full of examples where antagonists have cooperated in order to avoid a clash; for instance the Cuban and Berlin Crises clearly illustrate this issue.

B. The Israeli Withdrawal: Model Shift

The Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in May 25, 2000 marked the shift from the Deterrence model to the Spiral Model. This event is of major importance and cannot be analyzed in one single paragraph. Since the thesis is about the models and games in application, the author will not explore the withdrawal and the reasons behind it in depth, however it is important to highlight its relationship in regards to the model shift.

In fact, to argue that the withdrawal had an objective to change the model in application is hard to prove. Nevertheless, the shift in models is certain. Thus, the shift in model could be seen as consequence of the withdrawal and not an end by itself. Hezbollah and its first ally

¹⁶ Ibid. , 119.

¹⁷ Ibid. , 120.

Syria were cautious in the period following the withdrawal especially concerning the future of the armed presence of the party in the South. Later on, the unresolved issue of the Sheb'aa farms was adopted to justify the presence of Hezbollah on the southern borders of Lebanon.

Moreover, if the withdrawal had not been planned to trigger a shift then many factors were involved in replacing the Deterrence model by the Spiral model. One factor could be the narrow geographical area where Hezbollah could operate against Israel. Prior to withdrawal, Hezbollah was operating in the Security Zone; after May 25th, the area was only limited to the Sheb'aa farms. Even more, the borders are closely monitored by Israel and the occurrence of operations is hard and their success even harder. Finally, throughout the years that followed the withdrawal, Hezbollah and Israel could have found that the Spiral Model suits them better especially that it meant that borders will be much calmer than they used to be during the Deterrence model.

C. The Spiral Model

In the month of May 2000, the Israeli troops withdrew from the occupied zone but remained in the Sheb'aa farms. The withdrawal that was previously planned to happen in the month of July marked a switch from the deterrence model between Hezbollah and Israel replacing it instead by the Spiral Model. This thesis will cover the application of this model from the year 2000 until the year 2006, more precisely after the end of the July War of 2006. The players in this model see the world as governed by anarchy and thus each player should be strong enough to protect itself from all sorts of threats.¹⁸ Consequently, the security dilemma governs the relationship among the players. In the strictest sense, the definition of the security dilemma as provided by neoliberal John Herz is that states are driven to

¹⁸ Jervis, *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics*, 62.

continuously acquire more and more power in order to escape the impact of the power of others. It is known as a dilemma because it engenders a continuous cycle of power accumulation, as states acquire more power, other states are then more insecure and are compelled to feel threatened, and hence continue acquiring more power. The initial neorealist theory is centered on the issue of security and relative power. The best way to for a state to survive in anarchy is to take advantage of other states and gain power at their expense (increase relative power). Then because no state can ever feel completely secure (due to the anarchy in the international system), perpetually-competing states (or in this case, state and non-state actor) will continue to strive towards more power.¹⁹ This is exactly what happened after the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000.

Although Israeli troops are no longer present on Lebanese soil (since the Sheb'aa issue is yet to be resolved), the conflict is still ongoing. No peace treaty has been signed between Lebanon and Israel; and Hezbollah, as the sole power in direct confrontation with Israel, still considers the latter to be the ultimate enemy, after all it is that adversity that makes up the party's *raison d'être*. Even more so, Israel had continuously expressed its worry regarding the missiles of Hezbollah that had the ability to hit the northern villages. Meanwhile and within this arms race period, Israel had been training its troops in anticipation of the next battle against Hezbollah. The reporter Seymour Hersh mentions a meeting between American and Israeli officials that took place in Washington early in the summer of 2006 (before the war occurred) where they planned a "crushing attack on Hezbollah."²⁰ Analogously and largely for the exact same reason, Hezbollah had been preparing well for such a war. In fact, the 2006 war proved clearly that both parties have engaged in an arms race. From Hezbollah's perspective, the result was more evident when compared to its performance in the previous two wars. For example, new missiles were used that could target cities further inland such as

¹⁹ Ibid. , 66-67.

²⁰ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 134.

Haifa. Indeed, the party showed a substantial increase in the number of rockets and the frequency of their launching. Uzi Rubin points out that the party launched more rockets in the last day before the end of the war more than any other day of the 33-day conflict.²¹

Moreover, Hezbollah used developed Anti-Tanks Guided (ATG) missiles that proved to have great damaging impact on the notorious Merkava Israeli tanks.²² On the 9th of August alone, Hezbollah was able to destroy nine Merkava tanks in Wadi Al Hujair near Al-Litani River.²³

Hezbollah also used anti-ships rockets for the first time during the conflict with Israel.

Nasrallah announced the targeting of an Israeli ship across Beirut during a televised speech; the rocket was an Iranian C-802 Noor guided Missile.²⁴

The prisoner's dilemma perfectly illustrates the relationship between Hezbollah and Israel since the 25th of May 2000. After Israel withdrew from Lebanon, Hezbollah and Israel seems to have acknowledged that there should be a change in the rules of the game; in other words, what used to apply before the year 2000 does not after it. After being governed by the Deterrence Model and the fighting of two dead-end wars, both parties knew that cooperation yields better results because the dynamic has effectively evolved into a multi-play prisoner's dilemma. The Spiral Model was adopted and the "trust payoff" prevailed. After 2000, the borders between Lebanon and Israel became much quieter, a limited number of incidents took place and the norms previously talked about all applied. Both parties seemed to be eager to stay within the norms and to keep cooperation alive. The July War of 2006 was the only exception during that period, definitely another indicator that cooperation is the norm since

²¹ Uzi Rubin, "Hezbollah's Rocket Campaign Against Northern Israel: A Preliminary Report", *Jerusalem Issue Brief (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs)* 6, no. 10 (August 31, 2006).

²² Andrew Chadwick, "The 2006 Lebanon War: A Short History," *Small Wars Journal*, September 11, 2012, accessed April 22, 2014, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-2006-lebanon-war-a-short-history>.

²³ *Arabic Military*, last modified February 23, 2011, accessed April 22, 2014, <http://www.arabic-military.com/t20662-topic>.

²⁴ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 136.

2000, especially if we compare it to the 1992-2000 period which witnessed two major clashes in 1993 and 1996. During the July War, Hezbollah and Israel opted for the “nasty payoff”, both defected and the result was a destructive war for both of them.

Israel seems now convinced that Hezbollah is the best enemy it could ever get. Hezbollah too believes Israel to be the perfect cause to justify its military presence (which has an increasingly larger role to play in the internal politics of Lebanon). This is not to say that Israel and Hezbollah are allies but are instead playing a role of enemies while remaining cognizant of their mutual benefit from the arrangement. Both parties wish the other to disappear, but until one of them does, cooperation seems to be the mutually beneficial course of action. In other words, both players will cooperate until further notice because this is the best thing to do. Directly after the end of the war, cooperation was readopted. Today in 2014, eight years have passed with a level of stability not seen in the history of the conflict. The past and the present have proved that cooperation worked best for both players. The wars that took place in 1993, 1996, and 2006 are only exceptions. They occurred because factors, circumstances and the context led Israel to believe deviating from cooperation; whether swerving or defecting; would lead them to yield a greater payoff, to get rid of Hezbollah. Many factors are involved in a decision to wage war (see the section about the causes of war in Chapter VI). To explain it more clearly, Hezbollah and Israel are enemies; they both wish to destroy each other because they both represent a great threat to each other. However, Israel will never find an enemy which has been proven to be rational in its decisions, knows so well the norms and knows how to stay within them. With so many potential enemies in the region (Syria, Iran, Islamist groups), Israel would never have found an enemy who could keep its northern borders as stable and calm as they have been in recent years, and this stems directly from repetitive “games”, whether chicken or prisoner’s dilemma, which have educated both parties on the value of cooperation over mutual destruction. Hezbollah, by being the only

force in South Lebanon that can operate against Israel did a great favor to the latter and to a large extent to itself. Hezbollah will never find a greater cause than Israel for its existence. In the first place, it was Israel which triggered the birth of Hezbollah. Later on, and with all the changes that occurred throughout the years, Israel was transformed into something that not only gives Hezbollah a great reason to exist, a *raison d'être*, but also many advantages. Hezbollah, by being a well-trained group with advanced weapons, is a more valuable pawn in the axis formed by Iran and Syria, and thus will not be discarded by regional overlords as long as it fulfills a perceived purpose. Moreover, Hezbollah enjoys its military superiority internally to create a balance of terror in internal politics of Lebanon; the example of what happened in the 7th of May 2008 is a great illustration of this advantage.²⁵ Finally, being an enemy of Israel gives great popular support to Hezbollah from Arab populations, especially that many Arab regimes are accused of being implicitly cooperating with Israel. All in all, both parties enjoy many advantages from the other's existence. Hezbollah and Israel seem to be in a situation of 'Live and Let Live'; similar to the situation during World War I where enemies were facing each other on the front but no confrontations occurred.²⁶ As a result, and until further notice, the spiral model is the model to be adopted and cooperation is here to stay.

²⁵ In this day, Hezbollah's fighters took over Beirut after the government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora voted two laws that target the party's interests.

²⁶ The Christmas Truce of 1914 is an example of the application of the 'Live and Let Live'.

In the next three chapters, the author will present the norms that governed this conflict under the aforementioned models. Moreover, he will explore the context of the wars, the three wars that were the exceptions to the norms and what were the main causes of their occurrence.

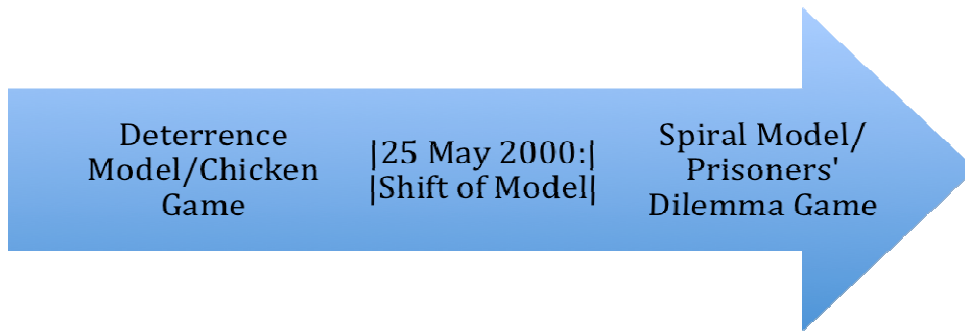


Figure 1. The Models in application

CHAPTER IV

THE NORMS

After the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1990 and after the Lebanese political parties signed the Taef Agreement²⁷ in Saudi Arabia, all armed factions throughout the country were disarmed with the exception of Hezbollah. The Taef Agreement was an accord approved by regional and international powers, in particular the United States of America, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Syria to end the war in Lebanon. Syria was given a *de facto* green light to control the Lebanese political life (some argue as a gift for its backing of the military operation against Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War) and thousands of soldiers and officers from its army and secret services members remained in Lebanon and started to wield a great deal of influence in all the details of Lebanon's internal political and economic life. At that time, Syria approved the Iranian wish to keep Hezbollah's arms and military operations against Israel. As such, Hezbollah emerged from the civil war with a Syrian political cover, as the sole Lebanese armed group in Lebanon. Even more so, it was granted the right to conduct military operations against the Israeli army and the South Lebanon Army (SLA), which defected from the original Lebanese army during the civil war and was backed by Israel.²⁸ After the Operation *Peace for Galilee* in 1982 which led to the invasion of Lebanon and the siege of its capital Beirut, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) retreated into an area which was known later as the Security Zone (see Figure. 2). The Security Zone remained

²⁷ The Taef Agreement was signed in the city of Taef in Saudi Arabia in 1989 by the Lebanese members of parliament to end the Lebanese civil war. The United States of America, France, Syria, and Saudi Arabia were the main sponsors of the agreement.

²⁸ "South Lebanon Army (SLA)," European Institute for Research on Mediterranean and Euro-Arab Cooperation (MEDEA), accessed December 20, 2013, <http://www.medeas.be/en/countries/kuwait/south-lebanon-army-sla/>.

under the control of the IDF and the SLA until the Israeli withdrawal in 2000 and Israel lost 256 soldiers between 1985 and 2000 in this area.²⁹

During the time period covered by this thesis (1992-2006), the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel appeared to be following certain norms that both parties respected. In this paper, three norms are going to be developed to better illustrate the dynamics of this conflict.



Figure 2. The Security Zone

Source: http://counterterrorismblog.org/2010/05/ten_years_ago_hezbollah_takes.php

A. State Actor vs. Non-State Actor

First, the conflict was between a non-state actor (Hezbollah) and a state actor (Israel). As mentioned earlier, it was Hezbollah that was given the right to conduct military operations against Israel after the end of the Lebanese civil war. The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF, the official army) did not deploy on the southern borders after the war, only the presence of the

²⁹ Gal Luft, "Israel's Security Zone in Lebanon - A Tragedy?" *Middle East Quarterly* (September 2000): 13-20.

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) that deployed in 1978 remained there. As a result, the confrontations remained solely between Hezbollah and the IDF and the SLA during the Norms-Mode. The LAF seemed to be marginalized in this conflict and did not interfere in any of the operations. This could be a decision that was taken by the Lebanese government, with the approval of Syria of course, as a strategy to detach the Lebanese official forces, as well as Syrian troops in Lebanon from this conflict. This would serve to avoid a liability on the international stage as it would have been seen state aggression, especially with the United States at the height of its hegemony in the post-Cold War era and its weight thoroughly behind Israel. In this way, Lebanon as a state can argue that the operations of Hezbollah are acts of a popular resistance against Israeli occupation, and thus can secure its troops from any retaliation acts conducted by the IDF following the attacks of party. This strategy seemed to work well when the norms were applied. Another factor that helped this strategy work was the abstention of Hezbollah since its creation from participating in the Lebanese government (The party participated for the first time in 2005 after the Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon). This gave the party a freedom to act independently from accountability to the government (which it would have had to had it been an integral part of it) and conversely relieved the Lebanese government from responsibility for the acts of a party that is not represented in it. In that way, the conflict remained between Hezbollah and Israel without the interference of the Lebanese government explicitly. This is not to say that the Lebanese government was not approving the operations of Hezbollah or Hezbollah was not given the green light from some part of the government (or of the Syrian political backrooms dictating policy), especially that the decision to keep Hezbollah's arms after the civil war was approved by the Lebanese state. But by keeping Hezbollah the only faction that is responsible of conducting operations against Israel, the Lebanese state succeeded in making itself distant from the direct conflict and its implications.

Furthermore, the fact that Hezbollah is the only group to operate against Israel in South Lebanon has many regional benefits for the party's regional allies such as Syria and Iran. In fact, quite often, the timing of Hezbollah's operations was linked to local and/or regional events. Thus, the presence of Hezbollah on the border can be used to put pressure on regional or local players to accept Syria's will in Lebanon and the region. For instance, Hezbollah's operation on the 16 of February 2001 coincided with a visit of the Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri to Paris. Some argue that this operation was to embarrass Hariri during his visit to the French capital especially that at that time the relationship between Hariri and Hezbollah was under going a strain.³⁰

B. No Escalation

Second, the military operations that both entities conducted were designed in order not to trigger escalation that would lead to full-scale wars. This was the case during the years in which the norms were applied. Both parties engaged in operations against each others and both parties retaliated, however, there seems to be that these operations were only designed to keep the conflict a low-intensity war instead of going into a full-scale war. The nature of the conflict during Norms-Mode was governed by the notion that every operation will be faced by a similar operation in terms of the intensity of the retaliation in a way not to hurt more than it is necessary. For instance, when the IDF attacks a position for Hezbollah, the party would retaliate by attacking an IDF convoy or patrol. On May 7, 2002, Hezbollah opened fired on an Israeli patrol along the borders as a response for an attack that targeted one of its positions. Similarly, Israel destroyed an anti-aircraft position after this same position anti-

³⁰ Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 152.

craft shell killed a sixteen-year old boy in the town of Shlomi.³¹ The operations were very well calculated between Hezbollah and Israel. Interestingly enough, Hezbollah and Israel sometimes apologized when the military operations did not fit the rules of engagement; Hezbollah once apologized in November 1998 after a Katyusha rocket firing that the party did not authorize.³² The no escalation principle seemed to serve both entities. As it was previously defined more deeply in the chapter 3 of this thesis, Hezbollah and Israel found out that they were serving each others' interests and throughout the years this notion has been consolidated and this could explain the shift from the Deterrence Model to the Spiral model after the Israeli withdrawal. Thus, they both had an interest in keeping things calm between them until one of them believed that it is time to deviate from the norms and go to the exception which is the full-scale war option. As a result, this norm governed this conflict from 1992 until 2006.

C. Operations only on the Lebanese Territory

Third, the conflict was mainly limited to Lebanese areas with Israeli presence. This norm was first adopted after the end of the Operation Accountability in 1993 in the form of an oral agreement. It stated that Hezbollah would restrict its operations to the Security Zone and stop launching rockets against northern Israeli villages while Israel would avoid citizens when conducting operations against the party.³³ Nevertheless, this agreement did not last long: After Israel killed Lebanese citizens in 1996, Hezbollah fired rockets into Israel and the latter responded by conducting operation Grapes of Wrath in April of the same year. After the end of the war of 1996, Hezbollah and Israel readopted the Norms-Mode via the April

³¹ Daniel Sobelman, "New Rules of the Game: Israel and Hizbullah after the Withdrawal from Lebanon," *Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies*, Memorandum no. 69 (January 2004): 108-109.

³² Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 86.

³³ This oral agreement was negotiated by the United States.

Agreement, which resembled the 1993 Agreement in its content but this time was in written form. However, this time the norm seemed to have expanded to include all the Lebanese territories with Israeli presence and not only the security zone. Hezbollah would target IDF soldiers wherever they were on the Lebanese soil, not necessarily on the border or inside the security zone. For instance, when Israel sent a marine commando unit in September 5, 1997 to the Ansaria village near Sidon, outside the Security Zone, Hezbollah had a direct response and attacked the location of the commandos' deployment causing heavy casualties to the IDF unit. The clash lasted for three hours between fighters from Hezbollah and Israeli troops, and the party succeeded in killing 17 members of the unit as well as capturing some of their remnants that were later used in exchanging prisoners.³⁴

After the Israeli withdrawal in May 25, 2000, the party faced a serious challenge. While Israel was claiming that it had withdrawn from all occupied Lebanese territories, the party argued that the Sheb'aa farms were still under occupation.³⁵ This debate is still ongoing since the United Nation determined the farms to be Syrian land subject to negotiations between Syria and Israel. Substantial evidence has been presented supporting the claim that the farms were part of Lebanon and Syria occupied them in 1960. However no practical solutions were taken despite attempts at arbitration, but the far-reaching consequences of giving in on this issue by either counterpart have hindered any progress and the adversity around the farms is still ongoing. As a result, after the Israeli withdrawal, and in addition to anti-aircraft missiles, the operations of Hezbollah only targeted the IDF in these lands considered by the party to be Lebanese.³⁶ One should also note the dramatic decrease in the

³⁴Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, (Beirut: SAQI, 2010), 213-214.

³⁵ The Victory Speech by Nasrallah the following day of the withdrawal of Israeli troops, Nicholas Noe ed., *Voice of Hezbollah: Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*, (New York: Verso, 2007), 240.

³⁶ Sobelman. "New Rules of the Game: Israel and Hizbullah after the Withdrawal from Lebanon", 69.

number of operations of Hezbollah against the IDF after the withdrawal in 2000 (see chapter 3).

Summary

These were the norms that governed the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel from 1992 until 2006. Both parties “cooperated” in a certain way, more often implicitly than explicitly, centered on mutual perceptions surrounding capabilities, intentions and potential responses of either counterparty, in order to stay within these norms. However, things were not always controlled and exceptions are always a fixture in long-term conflicts. Whether planned or not, they will be denominated as exceptions since they signal a divergence from the steady-state. These exceptions were the three wars that marked the conflict between 1992 and 2006 during the years 1993, 1996, and 2006 and during which the norms were not respected and the whole foundation underpinning relative stability crumbled.

CHAPTER V

THE CONTEXT OF THE WARS

The context in which these wars took place seems to play a great role in their occurrence, setting the stage for breakdowns. The context could be divided into three levels: local (internal political dynamics of Israel and Lebanon), regional (interests of regional Middle Eastern players in Lebanon such as Syria, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Iran), and international (superpowers' positions towards events in the Middle East, United Nations Security Council resolutions...).

A. The Context of The War of 1993: “Operation Accountability”

The local and regional contexts of the war of 1993 were a great motive for this war to take place. During *Operation Accountability*, one can argue that Israel was optimistic regarding this operation as a result of many factors. Locally, Lebanon was just beginning to rebuild its institutions after a devastating civil war of 15 years and Hezbollah had recently been granted the exclusive right to operate as a resistance in South Lebanon after the disarming of all other armed groups. Thus, Israel expected the elimination of Hezbollah to be relatively straightforward since the party was still in the early stages of developing its military capabilities as a “resistance” and was unlikely to have aggregated much military might since the war. By attacking Hezbollah at this time, and by inflicting severe damages to Lebanon which was still under reconstruction, Israel was seeking to transmit a clear message to the Lebanese government and population that the stance of Hezbollah against Israel is one that would lead the country to destruction and one which the already war-torn country should seek to avoid by disarming the resistance. Quite interestingly, Hezbollah at that point had a

tense relationship with the Lebanese government and the Lebanese army. For instance, on September 13, 1993, during a manifestation organized by the party to protest against the Oslo Accord³⁷ between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, nine protesters were killed in confrontations with the Lebanese Army.³⁸ Israel was convinced that a full-scale war with Hezbollah and the targeting of Lebanese villages as well as the displacement of civilians would lead the Lebanese population, exhausted of nearly two decades of infighting to take a public stance against Hezbollah and accuse it of being the reason for this attack and probably lead the government to take actions against the party, more precisely to disarm it.

Inside Israel, the internal political situation also made the probability of war higher. The Labor government of Yitzhak Rabin accessed to power in 1992 after many failures of the previous Likud government of Yitzhak Shamir, in particular regarding the first Intifada. Moreover, Rabin failed to achieve an agreement with Syria during the meetings in Washington.³⁹ Israel seemed in dire need of a moral and political boost for its troops and population and a perceived easy victory against a “nuisance” such as Hezbollah could have yielded this outcome with minimal cost, or so it thought.

Regionally, Israel was conducting at that time peace talks with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) which led to the Oslo Agreement in September 1993. By getting rid of Hezbollah, Israel could have eliminated a threat on its northern borders and then could use that victory-driven ascendancy to take an upper hand during the peace talks with the PLO. Even more so, by achieving a deal with the PLO (the main face of the broader Arab-Israeli

³⁷ The Oslo Accord was signed on September 13, 1993 by Yasser Arafat (head of the PLO) and Yitzhak Rabin (Prime Minister of Israel) as an attempt to set a framework for the resolution of the conflict between Israel and the PLO. The United States of America and Russia sponsored the accord.

³⁸ Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, 204.

³⁹ Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (USA: Penguin Books, 2000), 531-533.

conflict), Israel would have laid the groundwork for easier talks with other Arab nations including Syria and Lebanon. Surely, any possible deal with Lebanon would be easier to achieve without the armed presence of Hezbollah, making the occurrence of *Operation Accountability* quite logical within such a local and regional context.

B. The Context of The War of 1996: “Operation Grapes of Wrath”

In 1996, Shimon Peres, who succeeded Rabin as prime minister and minister of defense after the assassination of the latter in November 1995, was preparing for the coming elections in October in which polls showed an advantage for the Likud party headed by Binyamin Netanyahu. In parallel, Peres was preparing to re-open diplomatic channels (albeit secretly) with Syria in order to achieve an agreement. However, Hafez Al-Assad, then president of Syria, showed strong reservations especially regarding the Golan Heights.⁴⁰ Avi Shlaim argues that at that time “The domestic political situation in Israel made Lebanon a tempting target for military intervention.”⁴¹ As it turns out from different accounts, Israel had other objectives than just remove the threat of Hezbollah’s rockets. In fact, Peres sought to enhance his image as a leader who is able to wage and win wars. In addition, Peres attacked Syria’s ally in Lebanon (Hezbollah) in order to force President Assad to play a new role, “an Israeli gendarme in Lebanon.”⁴²

Internationally, the USA approved the operation against Lebanon.⁴³

As a result, Peres could not achieve his military goals since Hezbollah’s rockets stockpiles were not completely destroyed and all the operation could do was to restore the 1993 oral

⁴⁰ Ibid., 551-554.

⁴¹ Ibid., 559

⁴² Ibid., 560.

⁴³ Ibid.

agreement but this time in the form of the written April Understanding and predictably Peres lost the elections.⁴⁴

C. The Context of The War of 2006: “The July War” or “Lebanon’s Second War”

Finally, in 2006, all three levels: the local, regional, and international contexts in 2006 turned out to have highly impacted the decision of going to war. First of all, the internal political atmosphere in Lebanon was reaching its breaking point. Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri had been assassinated in February 2005 in Beirut and this event was followed by the withdrawal of the Syrian troops in April of the same year. This incident had an impact on the Lebanese political scene and divided the country into two main political blocs: the 14 March bloc which accused Syria of the assassination and was led by the Future Movement of Hariri’s son Saad El Dine, and the 8 March bloc which was pro-Syrian and was led by Hezbollah. Thus the atmosphere in the country was predominantly one of an internal schism where Hezbollah’s once overwhelming popularity post-liberation in 2000 was for the first time under serious threat. Therefore, an Israeli strike against Hezbollah especially that it was Hezbollah’s abduction operation that triggered the war would probably have internal Lebanese reaction to condemn the party’s operation.

Moreover, an Arab and international umbrella was present to cover such an operation. In fact, after UNSC resolution 1559 that demanded the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon (as well as Hezbollah) and the clear opposition to Hezbollah’s role as a pro-Syrian party, such an operation would plausibly be welcomed even if Israel was the one conducting it. The United States Secretary of State at that time Condoleezza Rice and few days after the launch of the attack commented during a press conference that the Arab region was witnessing “the

⁴⁴ Ibid. , 561-562.

birth pangs of a new Middle East”. Finally, President Husni Mubarak, then president of Egypt, and King Abdullah II of Jordan condemned Hezbollah’s “adventurism”. Likewise, Prince Saud Al Faisal, minister of foreign affairs of the KSA, during the Arab League summit that gathered after the war erupted, described Hezbollah’s attack as “unexpected, inappropriate, and irresponsible acts.”⁴⁵ All in all, everything seemed to be in place for such an attack, one that had as a main objective the destruction of Hezbollah in few days. Once more, this did not happen, and the conflict was ended by the UNSC 1701 resolution. Almost none of Israel’s objectives were achieved and a scandal took place after the poor performance of the IDF during this war and an investigative committee was formed to question this fiasco, it was later known as the Winograd Committee. However, this time and according to the UNSC resolution 1701, Hezbollah had to remove its military presence from the border zone and instead the Lebanese Army was deployed as well as an augmented force of the previously deployed UNIFIL contingent along the borders, a minor success for Israel considering its objectives going into the war.

In summary, when looking at the wars within the domestic, regional and international contexts within which they occurred, it becomes easier to understand how the protagonists, mainly Israel, were led to succumb to Van Evera’s different “causes for war”. The windows of opportunity for ascendancy in a deterrence-based dynamic such as the one between Israel and Hezbollah are slim, and Israel’s strong need to address the threat has led it time and time again to venture in larger scale operations.

⁴⁵ Steven Stalinsky, “Arab World Divided Over Hezbollah”, *New York Sun*, April 19, 2006, accessed April 22, 2014, <http://www.nysun.com/foreign/arab-world-divided-over-hezbollah/36281/>.

CHAPTER VI

THE EXCEPTIONS AND THEIR CAUSES

Three full-scale wars took place between Hezbollah and Israel from 1992 until 2006. Three full-scale wars took place between Hezbollah and Israel from 1992 until 2006. These wars are considered to be exceptions in this conflict since they are testimonies of events and military acts that were not usually adopted throughout the years were the norms reigned. As discussed at length in previous chapters, a set of norms marked the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel during the period examined. However, during these three wars, both players behaved differently and violated all the norms hence the label “exceptions”. Moreover, another indicator that these wars were only exceptions is the fact that directly after they ended, Hezbollah and Israel moved directly back to the Norms-Mode. The first two wars of 1993 and 1996 took place before the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000 while in contrast, the July War of 2006 was the only war that occurred after the Israeli withdrawal.

The first norm violated during these wars is that the conflict is between a state actor and a non-state actor. In fact, during all of these wars, Israel did not only attack Hezbollah’s position and military groups. Israel held the Lebanese official government responsible of Hezbollah’s operations in south Lebanon and thus targeted other regions in Lebanon despite no Hezbollah presence. Positions of the Lebanese army and police were targeted during these wars. Moreover, Lebanese villages, citizens, vital roads, electricity plants, as well as main bridges were all included as targets for Israeli air raids. Similarly, the Lebanese army was involved in these conflicts mainly by launching anti-aircraft missiles against Israeli jet fighters as self-defense.

The second violation of norms consists of limiting the military actions to Lebanese lands with Israeli presence. In Norms-Mode, most of Hezbollah's operations were limited to the security zone and targeted IDF soldiers as well as SLA members. Few incidents took place outside the security zone. Hezbollah also occasionally launched Katyusha rockets on Israeli northern villages but these are considered to be minor incidents since Hezbollah justified them as a deterrence method. Indeed, whenever the IDF has targeted Lebanese civilians, the party has launched rockets on Israeli villages and as a result this was not considered a general pattern of the conflict, rather confirming the *'eye for an eye'* deterrence strategy.⁴⁶ However, during the full-scale wars of 1993, 1996, and 2006, this norm was not respected. From the part of Israel, the IDF launched operations outside the security zone against positions of Hezbollah in the Beqaa or in the suburb of Beirut. Likewise, Hezbollah relied heavily on its short-range and medium-range rockets to target Israeli villages and military positions inside of Israel in addition to face-to-face combats outside of the security zone.

Finally, during these exceptions, military operations from both sides were not calculated the way they used to be in Norms-Mode. Throughout the majority of the timespan of the conflict, Hezbollah and Israel's military operations against each other were not meant to trigger an escalation that lead to full-scale wars. However, once a full-scale war starts (should it start), both belligerents engaged in all sorts of operations since the escalation has already taken place, creating an effective vortex where absolute show/acts of power took ascendancy over show of relative power aiming at deterrence. That notwithstanding, both parties were keen on not crossing some red lines; for instance Israel did not target the Presidential Palace or other official Lebanese sites, similarly Hezbollah made sure not to

⁴⁶ Interview with Hezbollah's Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in the documentary "The Lebanese Parties" published by the Sabbah Media Company, 2004. Accessed November 2, 2013.

target sensitive areas in Israel. This was mainly aimed towards avoiding elevating the armed conflict to an international conflict between state entities with Lebanon forced to involve its army should official buildings be targeted. For example, in the last war of July 2006, Hezbollah threatened to attack Tel Aviv if Israel targets Beirut, but neither of them did so. More broadly, one can argue that during full-scale wars, the intensity of military operations conducted by both players did not resemble the intensity during Norms-Mode.

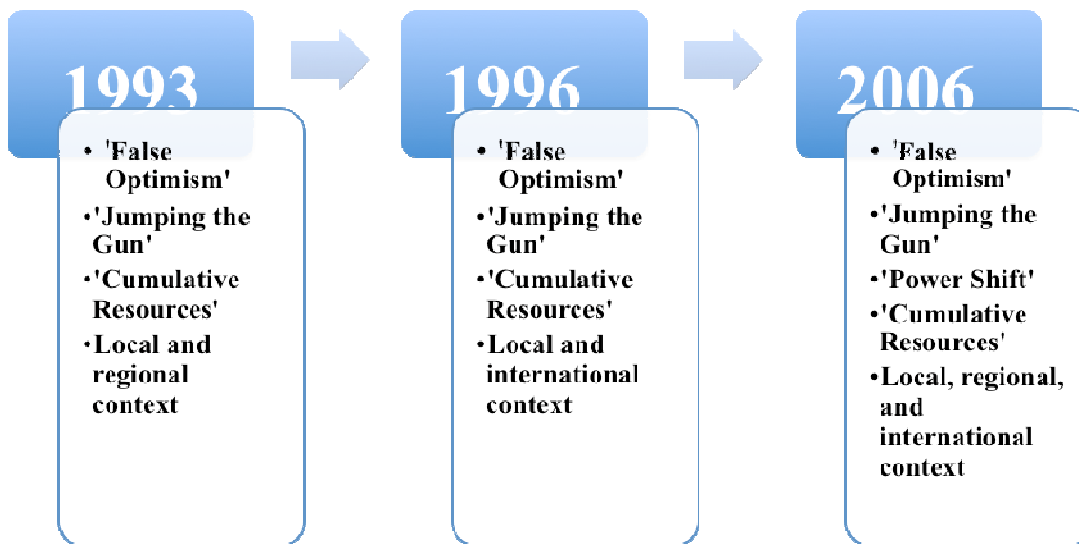


Figure 3. The Exceptions, their context, and their Causes

A. The Exceptions

1. *The War of 1993: “Operation Accountability”*

On July 25th 1993, the first exception took place in the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel. Israel launched “Operation Accountability” after Hezbollah killed several IDF

soldiers in an operation inside the Security Zone.⁴⁷ The war lasted a week and the casualties in terms of infrastructure and human lives were heavy for Lebanon. Almost 6,000 houses were destroyed in South Lebanon and around 140 Lebanese civilians were killed. In Israel, two civilians were killed and 24 injured.⁴⁸ During this first exception, both parties did not respect the norms they usually respect in their conflict. Israel did not only target Hezbollah's position but their operations were against various regions in Lebanon that did not include Hezbollah's positions or headquarters. This was a direct violation of the first norm which limited the conflict between a state actor being Israel and a non-state actor being Hezbollah. By targeting regions inside of Lebanon such as the Beqaa area, the Al-Bared Palestinian camp in north Lebanon, and the Naameh area near Beirut, in addition the homes of thousands of civilians, Israel was targeting the Lebanese state and population and not only Hezbollah or its regions of influence. Similarly, Hezbollah intensified its rocket launching targeting many Israeli villages and not only IDF and SLA troops. Moreover, the party succeeded in executing thirty military operations during this war.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, different weapons were used than those usually used while the norms are effectively in place. Air raids and artillery were heavily used by Israel during this. Analogously, Hezbollah relied on the Katyusha rockets, a weapon that was rarely used during Norms-Mode; Nasrallah announced that the Katyusha "has led to a new formula based on mutual forced displacement, mutual destruction, and equal terror."⁵⁰

The "Operation Accountability" had two main objectives according to Israel's Foreign Affairs minister Shimon Peres: the first is "to attack those who directly attack us, especially Hizbullah, and to alert the population of Lebanon and the concerned governments to the necessity of terminating the activity of Hizbullah", and the second aim was to disarm

⁴⁷ Noe, ed., *Voice OF Hezbollah: Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*, 100.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, 200.

⁵⁰ Noe, ed., *Voice of Hezbollah: Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*, 101.

Hezbollah.⁵¹ After the unwritten agreement of July 1993, the war stopped on the eve of July 31st without Israel's being able to achieve its aforementioned objectives and Hezbollah's military presence remained steadfast in South Lebanon. The Norms-Mode was re-implemented directly after the end of this war.

2. *The War of 1996: "Operation Grapes of Wrath"*

On April 11, 1996, the IDF launched the military operation "Grapes of Wrath" which lasted 16 days. Israel argued that the operation was a response for the launching of rockets by Hezbollah against its northern territories. The party announced that the launching of these rockets was a retaliation after an attack on Lebanese civilians in the towns of Yater and Barasheet, respectively on March 30 and April 9.⁵² This war is considered to be the second exception that marked the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel. Both belligerents violated the norms. In addition to targeting Hezbollah's positions, the IDF conducted air raids against civilian targets, leaving around 250 victims during the war, more than 100 of them during one attack on Qana village after the civilians sought safety in a United Nations compound.⁵³ Even more so, a Lebanese army base was attacked in the city of Tyre as well as a building in Beirut's southern suburb (considered to be the main area of Hezbollah's influence in Beirut).⁵⁴ Moreover, Israel sent military ships across the maritime border and into the waters of Lebanon to blockade the country's port and attacked two main electrical plants. Conversely, Hezbollah intensified the launch of Katyusha rockets on Israeli villages injuring

⁵¹ Shimon Peres, *Glorious Pages in the Nation's Book* (1993), 67.

⁵² Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, 206.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 207.

around 26 Israeli civilians according to a Human Rights Watch report.⁵⁵ Finally, the casualties were also in terms of destroyed Lebanese homes which were around 7,000.⁵⁶

This war was longer than the previous war; it lasted sixteen days and was ended on April 27, 1996 after representatives from France, the United States, Syria, Israel, and Lebanon signed the “April Understanding” on the 26th of the same month. Similarly to the situation following the end of the war of 1993, Israel could not attain its objective of disarming or eliminating Hezbollah, and both players went back to the Norms-Mode after the end of this war.

3. *The War of 2006: “The July War” or “Lebanon’s Second War”*

The war of 2006 was the only war that Hezbollah and Israel fought after the Israeli withdrawal in 2000. It was also the last war between them to date. On July 12, 2006, Hezbollah abducted two Israeli soldiers during an operation in South Lebanon. The reason behind the abduction was -as the Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah announced during a press conference following the operation - was to get leverage in exchange for Lebanese prisoners in Israel. Nasrallah had two conditions for the release of the Israeli soldiers: indirect negotiations and the release of the Lebanese prisoners.⁵⁷ Hezbollah’s leader had already hinted during a speech on April 24, 2006 that the party was willing to capture Israeli soldiers in order to exchange them with Lebanese prisoners in Israel. He addressed Samir Al-Quntar, the longest-held Lebanese detainee in Israel:⁵⁸

⁵⁵ “Civilian Pawns: Laws of War Violations and the Use of Weapons on the Israel-Lebanon Border,” Human Rights Watch, May 1996, accessed January 3, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/Israel.htm>.

⁵⁶ Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, 207.

⁵⁷ Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, press conference following the operation in July 12, 2006, accessed February 15, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjUyFhbeOzU>.

⁵⁸ Noe, ed., *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*, 371-372.

Let me seize this opportunity to tell the dean of all detainees, the great resistance fighter and old mujahid Samir Qintar, the following. I read your letters, especially the last one, in which you said that you are pinning your hopes on the resistance and on me personally. I assure you once again, that your hopes are sound and in their right place, and that the coming days and the spilled blood will prove me right. We look for excuses, and tell ourselves that perhaps it is the will of God that you stay where you are a bit much longer, so that you would remain our cause, though it will not be for much longer now.

The main objective of Israel during that war was the unilateral destruction of Hezbollah.⁵⁹ In fact, this aim was quite clear due to the casualties and the firepower used during that war, which was most flagrantly an *all-out* war of all three aforementioned wars, with little signs of Israel holding back on its military capabilities. In this offensive, “the Israeli Air Force launched more than 7,000 air attacks on about 7,000 targets in Lebanon between 12 July and 14 August, while the Navy conducted an additional 2,500 bombardments.”⁶⁰ Moreover, around 1,183 individuals were killed and around a 1,000,000 Lebanese citizens were displaced. Also, inhabitants of south Lebanon still suffer from cluster bombs that were left in the Lebanese land after the end of the war. The IDF fired around four million bomblets throughout the war and UN officials estimated the number of unexploded bomblets in the South Lebanon to be around one million.⁶¹ In a violation of the norms, not only Hezbollah’s positions and regions of influence were targeted. In a report for Amnesty International following the war, the following information was available: According to the Lebanese government, Israel targeted around 31 “vital points” such as airports, ports, and electrical

⁵⁹ Gilbert Achcar and Michel Waraschawski, *The 33-Day War: Israel’s War on Lebanon and its Aftermath* (Beirut: Saqi, 2007), 53.

⁶⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* (USA: Penguin Books, 2007), 321.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 322.

facilities; 80 bridges and 94 roads; more than 25 fuel station, around 900 commercial enterprises, and two governmental hospitals in Bint Jbeil and Meis El Jabal. Twenty-eight Lebanese soldiers were also killed during this war.⁶² In addition, more than 30,000 residential properties, offices, and shops were completely or partly destroyed.⁶³ The material losses in Lebanon were approximately \$4 billion.⁶⁴

Likewise, Hezbollah's attacks were much tougher compared to attacks during the Norms-Mode. The IDF reported that 118 of its soldier died and around 400 wounded during this conflict. Furthermore, 43 civilians were killed. The party launched around 4,500 rockets into Israel during this war damaging around 12,000 buildings and displacing around 500,000 Israeli citizens.⁶⁵ The material losses in Israel were around \$500 million.⁶⁶

The war ended on August 14, 2006. It had been preceded by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 on the 11th of the same month. This resolution paved the way for the cease-fire between Hezbollah and Israel. The outcome of that war shared some common points with the previous two wars but also some singularities. In terms of similarities, for the third time, Israel was neither able to get rid of Hezbollah nor disarm it through a military operation. On the contrary, in addition to keeping its arms, Hezbollah seemed to have "emerged from the war with its popularity and prestige significantly enhanced".⁶⁷ Furthermore, Hezbollah enjoyed great popular support, locally and regionally, while the attacker and perceived aggressor, Israel, further entrenched itself from its neighbors as its already low popular opinion in the region plummeted even further.⁶⁸ Finally, another

⁶² Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 142.

⁶³ Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israeli Lobby and US Foreign Policy*, 321.

⁶⁴ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 142.

⁶⁵ "Operation Change of Direction," Global Security, last modified July 11, 2011, accessed April 2, 2014, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/lebanon-change-of-direction.htm>.

⁶⁶ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 142.

⁶⁷ Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israeli Lobby and US Foreign Policy*, 306.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 314.

common point with the previous wars is that both Hezbollah and Israel were brought back to the Norms-Mode.

Nevertheless, the aftermath of this war was in some aspects different from that of the years 1993 and 1996. Even though Hezbollah was not disarmed, the party was forced to retreat its military from the borders with Israel according to the UNSC resolution 1701. The Lebanese Armed Forces deployed in South Lebanon for the first time since 1978. To help the LAF controlling the borders, the UNIFIL was enlarged and the number of its troops reached 15,000 members.⁶⁹ And for the first time in the history of Peacekeeping missions, the UNIFIL was reinforced with a naval force. From a strictly military and strategic perspective, this could be viewed as a victory for Israel since Hezbollah was not on its borders anymore, however the threat that the party represented seemed to be still present.

B. The Causes of the Exceptions

There are many causes that may have led both parties deviate from the norms and engage in full-scale wars. Four of these causes will be extracted from Stephen Van Evera's *Causes of War: Power and The Roots of Conflict*.

1. 'False Optimism'

One of the main causes of these wars is what Van Evera calls the "False Optimism."⁷⁰ This notion is based on the idea that a party is more likely to wage war when the war to be launched seems to be easily won and at relatively low costs. False Optimism was likely a

⁶⁹ "United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701," United Nations, August 11, 2006, accessed April 2, 2014, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8808.doc.htm>.

⁷⁰ Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 14.

main driver behind the decisions of Israel to launch a full-scale war against Hezbollah in all three instances the conflict escalated, in 1993, 1996, and 2006. The decision to launch such kind of larger-scale wars belongs to Israel and that is why it is the one that has been a victim of “False Optimism”. The decision of full-scale wars belongs to Israel simply because Hezbollah does not have the means or above-ground infrastructure of a fully-fledged army to launch a full-scale attack on Israel while knowing its limited capabilities in comparison with those of the IDF. What being the aggressor or attacker from a military perspective means is that the confrontation takes place on the opponent’s territory, which is an implied advantage for the latter and one that is difficult to assess for the aggressor, since it is in control of the terrain, opening itself up to ever-changing variables beyond its control. Therefore, one can argue that Hezbollah will in principle avoid such a decision unless a plan is discussed with other powers such as Syria and Iran to go into such a war, an unlikely prospect. During the period that is covered by this thesis, this has yet to happen, and would only happen in the future as a result of a confluence of factors where Hezbollah manages to amass enough military power while the IDF is spread across numerous fronts.

In 1993, Israel succumbed to ‘False Optimism’. In the strategic analysis of the IDF, a military group with few years of experience should not plausibly have the military infrastructure, manpower and technological capabilities to resist an assault of that magnitude by an army as developed as that of Israel. The perceived weaker player however managed to survive the attack and kept its armed presence in Southern Lebanon after the weeklong war.

Similarly, during the war in April 1996, Israel fell victim to “False Optimism”. It sought a quick operation with finite objectives that precluded (while welcome) eradication of the party, during which it would destroy Hezbollah’s rockets stockpiles as well as their launching position in order to secure its northern villages from the shelling of rockets. By decreasing the scope and goals of its attack, Israel succumbed to another variant of False

Optimism, relying on pure military technology mismatch to achieve perceived straightforward objectives. Although Hezbollah stopped the launch of missiles against Israel after the April Understanding, the IDF was unable to achieve its primary objective, to destroy Hezbollah's stocks of missiles, or remove its armed presence from the borders.

The latest war, in 2006 shares also the same "False Optimism" with the previous two wars, and to some extent was even more pronounced. The failures of the past were seen by Israel as lessons that half-measures or targeted objectives had failed because of their limited scale. Therefore, it believed reversing the strategy and using scale on top of military might to overpower the territorial advantage of Hezbollah would lead the war to be short in time and with indisputable success as a result of the sheer volume of forces committed. In fact, "Israel promised President Bush 'quick and decisive 'result'".⁷¹ Moreover, Israel compared its operation to the operation of the US in Kosovo but was convinced of achieving it in half the time.⁷² Again, things failed to go according to plan and this despite global political cover; the war lasted over a month and Israel again failed in its core objective of destroying Hezbollah.

2. *'Jumping the Gun'*

Another cause for wars between Hezbollah and Israel is what Van Evera calls "Jumping the Gun". This concept is that the aggressor believes that it has advantage if it is the first to launch the attack.⁷³ In fact, the aggressor would believe that the attacked party will be taken by surprise and thus diminishes its ability to block or resist the attack which will lead to the victory of the aggressor. As discussed above, the sheer mismatch in size and military capabilities has always implicitly meant that Israel would be the aggressor, and therefore with

⁷¹ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 139.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*, 37.

the comfort of that knowledge was free to evaluate the most propitious timing for an attack. While Hezbollah seemed to be taken by surprise as expected, the party also proved to have a fast reaction and showed a great capability to adapt to full-scale war with Israel, and each time better than the previous one. This ability to react quickly for Hezbollah stems in large part to its guerrilla-like tactical training, but more importantly from its decision-making independence from the central government, allowing rapid operational efficiency when the threat is made apparent. Moreover, and conversely to Israel's own knowledge that it would always be the aggressor in a full-scale war, Hezbollah firmly knows that it will be on the receiving end at one time or the other, and therefore is built around the duality of quick responsiveness in case of attack and constant vigilance so as not to signal weakness. Even though the wars between the two belligerents were longer and more devastating over time, Hezbollah was able to neutralize the IDF and capable to overcome the great difference in military capabilities between them, especially the advantage that the IDF has with its air force.

3. *'Power Shift'*

A third reason for war is "Power Shifts". In this case, the aggressor believes that it is better to wage war now than later since the aggressor seeks a power shift to his favor by attacking now, since he believes that attacking later would not yield the same outcome.⁷⁴ 'Power Shift' was not the main reason behind the 1993 and 1996 wars, but it surely was in the war of 2006. In fact, while Israel sought to eliminate Hezbollah first in 1993 when the party was still weak, the motive grew to be more of an imperative as the party's military abilities developed unchecked throughout the years and started to become a serious

⁷⁴ Ibid. , 73.

threat to Israel, one increasingly harder to eradicate, especially as it amassed unparalleled popular support in the region. This was perfectly illustrated by the length of the war, kind of weapons used, and the damages caused by the July War of 2006. Thus, during this war, and after reviewing the objectives of the operation, it is clear that Israel was determined to eliminate Hezbollah once and for all especially that the timing and the whole setting were ideal for such an operation (see the Context above). Israel likely believed that this war, if ever it was going to happen and given the ultimate goal of threat eradication then inevitably it would have to, then there would not be a better time for it to happen than as soon as possible and in an international environment with a friendly US government and strong anti-Hezbollah sentiment both in Lebanon post-2005 and worldwide post-9/11 and the denomination of the party as a terrorist organization. Israel knew that Hezbollah was accumulating more sophisticated weapons and was building the abilities of its fighters. Thus waiting more years for the war to happen implied that Hezbollah would only grow to be stronger and better prepared in the future. At that time, Israel was probably searching for a trigger to justify its attack; the abduction of the two soldiers played this role to perfection.

4. 'Cumulative Resources'

Finally, war is more likely to take place when the aggressor is seeking “Cumulative Resources.”⁷⁵ That is when an aggressor believes that war would lead him to protect or acquire more resources. In fact, the elimination (and only the elimination) of Hezbollah would yield Israel great benefits. Wars that do not destroy all of Hezbollah’s military capabilities will actually make Israel worse off. If Israel launches a war against Hezbollah and this war does not complete the main objective of eliminating Hezbollah, it is Hezbollah

⁷⁵ Ibid. , 105.

that will be considered the victorious. Hezbollah and Israel are perfect enemies, in other words, Israel will never find a better enemy than Hezbollah who knows well the 'rules of the game'. Therefore, it is in its own benefit to keep Hezbollah as its main enemy and not someone else until it can destroy the party completely. What Israel tried to do during its wars against Hezbollah, and especially during the July War of 2006, was to destroy it completely. The "Cumulative Resources" it would have yielded are many. First of all, it would have eliminated its number one enemy, one with which it shared a border. Moreover, it would guarantee the safety of its lands from rocket launching from Lebanon for good. Even more, if the operation of 2006 was successful, and knowing the international context at that time, Israel would have probably put pressure on the Lebanese government to sign a peace treaty with Israel and this would put an end once and for all to the state of war with Lebanon. Israel would also destroyed other Palestinian parties that are pro-Syrian such as the Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine and by doing this Israel would have guaranteed the security of its population and lands. However, as history now testifies, Israel was basically considered to be defeated in all three of its wars against Hezbollah. First of all, Israel could not achieve its objectives and this means a psychological defeat in the eyes of its people especially that it considers itself to be the strongest army in the region and is often labeled as the 'Invincible Army'. Furthermore, Israel only fueled its image as being a country that commits atrocities against civilians, making the Lebanese people all the more convinced of the necessity to fight it. Finally, by failing to achieve its goal of eliminating Hezbollah and each time the party survives, rearrange its forces, accumulates more sophisticated weapons, and proves to become stronger as years pass by, Israel is only making the next war more difficult to achieve, or even improbable to happen.

CHAPTER VII

OUTLOOK FOR THE CONFLICT

The conflict between Hezbollah and Israel dates back to 1982 when Hezbollah first emerged as a resistance force to fight the Israeli presence in Lebanon. Remarkably, the conflict has therefore been ongoing for a whole 32 years despite the fierce animosity and the exceptional volatility of the region. The main question going forward remains nevertheless the more complex to answer: What future awaits this conflict and what are the possible scenarios that could play out? The blessing and curse of examining a conflict through a theoretical and structural lens is that as much as it is powerful in understanding historical behavior and events it also suffers from the fate of most theories of international relations, that of lesser predictive value. As such, answering such questions becomes a challenging endeavor. However based on the approaches used to analyze this conflict throughout this thesis, one can try to use the historical interactions and norms to establish a behavioral “band” within which the conflict could evolve going forward.

First in terms of the norms/exceptions framework, one would expect some modifications in the rules of the game to mirror the changing realities on the ground. In fact, the conflict is apt to develop according to new norms since the exceptions will always be the occurrence of wars. New norms can exist on a multitude of levels. First, new norms can be established in relation to the territory on which the military operations take place. While during the whole years of the conflict, the theatre of operations was the Lebanese land on which there is an Israeli presence, a new norm could replace the old one regarding the lands on which Hezbollah operates against Israel. A new theatre of operations for Hezbollah could likely become the Golan Heights of Syria. In fact, after Hezbollah’s intervention in Syria to provide support to the Syrian army of President Bashar Al-Assad, and after Nasrallah’s

speech regarding a possible launch of a resistance in the Golan to liberate it from Israel, this option seems more probable than ever.⁷⁶ The ideological underpinning of this shift is robust, since Hezbollah has long championed itself as more than simply a Lebanese resistance but rather one of all Arabs in solidarity with the plight of the Palestinian people. The military and strategic underpinnings are equally strong, as Hezbollah is growing in scale and sophistication beyond the limited geographical boundaries of South Lebanon, albeit while still remaining at enough of a disadvantage relative to the IDF to avoid aggressions on Israeli soil. Finally, the internal political underpinnings are especially tense, driving Hezbollah to seek an anchor for its legitimacy beyond strictly the protection of Lebanese territories and more importantly beyond the increasingly unconvincing Shebaa farms issue. The modification of the previous norm is no easy task to achieve or to impose since it would mean a radical change of the whole rules of engagement that have governed the conflict from its inception. However such an option is not to be dismissed especially with the rapid evolution of events in the region. The ongoing crisis in Syria could favor the development of such a norm.

Another option would be Hezbollah attacking Israel's interest or people in other countries such as Europe or the Americas. While Israel has accused Hezbollah of doing so many times in the past such as the case in Argentina and Hungary, the party never took responsibility for these operations. Such a new norm if it is ever to happen will mean that Hezbollah will start to announce publicly its responsibility of such operations. However, it should be noted that an escalation on the international stage is likely to further entrench Hezbollah vis-à-vis the international community, jeopardizing itself for the marginal benefit of targeted blows to Israel. This makes this norm in the author's opinion the less likely to materialize.

⁷⁶ F. Michael Maloof, "Hezbollah Pledges To Boot Israel From Golan," *WND*, May 16, 2013, accessed April 22, 2014, <http://www.wnd.com/2013/05/hezbollah-pledges-to-boot-israel-from-golan/>.

A. Transition Back to the Deterrence Model?

Will both parties be convinced that the Spiral Model is not valid anymore? In effect, the major lesson taught by the 2006 war to both side of the trenches is that under the current dynamics of the conflict an arms race is mutually detrimental. The arms race and spiral model are the main drivers that led to the 2006 war being so devastating, and despite Hezbollah's claim of a divine victory, it was an extremely costly for little progress on the ground beyond ideological warfare. In the iterative game being played, it is therefore likely to come a point where both parties become aware of this self-fueled destruction and opt to return to a deterrence dynamic, allowing them to check each other through repetitive games rather than allowing space leading to a full-blown war such as 2006. This becomes especially true when recalling the point made earlier, that the parties are now aware that the existence of the conflict in and of itself is beneficial (see chapter 3). Therefore, when looking at the dynamic within the duality of self-preservation and historical lessons, reverting to deterrence become a much more conceivable probability. If for instance, the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel moves to Syria, both players could readapt the Deterrence Model and the '*eye for an eye*' operations that marked their conflict in South Lebanon from 1992 till 2000. On the ground, this would mean that the conflict will witness more operations from both sides and consequently will also mean a strong reaction to those operations in order to show firmness and to avoid any sign of weakness from any of the belligerents. However, as mentioned earlier this would also mean both parties would be more aware of their relative standing and hence less prone to miscalculations such as that of 2006 on Israel's part, therefore adding a layer of cautiousness similar to that which characterized most of the 1990s.

B. Spiral Forever?

Conversely and with aim of analyzing all possible outcomes, Hezbollah and Israel could feel that the Spiral Model already adopted suits them the best and could choose to stick to it. While this is easily fathomable from Hezbollah's perspective, Israel will likely feel inclined to change the dynamic that led to its dramatic failure in 2006. Assuming spiral would remain the order, what it would mean is that the security dilemma is here to stay and that the arms race is only to be intensified, with an inevitable breaking point coming when perceptions of might by either part and context align to trigger a decision that eradication is possible. Hezbollah and Israel will keep on acquiring new and developed weapons, and the damages that could occur if any war is to be triggered will be definitely more serious than any of the previous wars. The perpetuation of the would likely mean that the borders will remain calm between Lebanon and Israel and cooperation will continue to be adopted especially that both players seem to have mastered it and the interests of both are being fulfilled by it. However, this will most likely be similar to the artificial stability of the early 2000s, as it will also mean that any new war would be a devastating one due to the arms race that both players would be engaged in.

C. Endless Conflict, Peace, or Else?

No matter which of the possibilities discussed throughout this chapter is going to actually to take place, the nature of the conflict will certainly be impacted and is unlikely to remain static for long. Theoretically, the conflict however could endure forever, without any clear end or resolution, like many other conflicts throughout the world: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Korean conflict, just to name a few. However, the possibility of the next breakdown being the last is impossible to discard, as it involves a flurry of variables that

could literally overthrow any established order. Conversely, peace between Hezbollah and Israel is one of the options. An agreement or peace talks in the region could result in the end of the conflict although it seems difficult to see a way where Hezbollah accepts an arrangement that would put in question its basis of existence. Finally, though unexpected to happen, the elimination of one of the players will mean the end of the conflict.

Evidently, the future in the region is rife with uncertainty, whether related to the Syrian Civil War, to an ever-present possibility of internal political collapse in Lebanon, to an all-encompassing Iran-US agreement that cuts the funding pipeline to Hezbollah or even to a materialization of the elusive peace agreement between Israel and the PLO. The overarching importance of the context in the way the conflict has fluctuated in intensity over the last two decades implies that it will remain a near-impossible task to forecast where the chips may fall. However, throughout this analysis it has become clear that both players are both as self-interested and rational as their mutual hatred is fierce, hence providing a measure of control to the conflict that numerous studies about the topic overlook. Hence their independent perception of what yields them most benefit individually as well as their perception of each other's strength will remain intertwined in coming years (cooperation vs. defection). The military evolution of Hezbollah to become a fierce opponent to Israel will make this perception of superiority by the latter increasingly hard to maintain going forward.

After examining at length the complexity and layering of drivers behind the slogans, wars and bloodshed, the author believes the conflict is evolving into a new equilibrium, one of mutual fear and vigilance. A 32-year iterative game is one after which it becomes increasingly hard for players to diverge from the equilibrium outcome, even more so after three respective defections which have led to the aggressor being "punished" (in game theory terminology). This will add a layer of stability that could likely be prolonged. As such, the author believes that barring any of the international, regional or domestic "black swans"

mentioned above, the conflict could perpetuate within the structural framework presented in this study, and more specifically staying within the Spiral model.

However, and as history has proved all too well, the Middle East has seldom been known for its predictability. Thus, despite having found a new equilibrium, the future will likely hold its share of unexpected strains for the conflict. In the words of Nicholas Taleb “The inability to predict outliers implies the inability to predict the course of history” and that is certainly true of the Hezbollah-Israel conflict.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Thirty-two years have passed and the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel rages on, albeit with speeches, slogans, vitriol replacing the violence of the early years. The conflict has witnessed many changes at many levels but seems here to stay. Hezbollah and Israel are like “two enemies in love with one another” to quote Dostoyevsky. Numerous governments in Israel were formed, many leaders got to power, many of them died and some are still alive, none of which was able to end this conflict and for several nor did they really want to. Similarly, Hezbollah has undergone a fundamental evolution from being a newly-born militia to fight the Israeli invasion in 1892 to become one of the strongest players in the Lebanese and regional arenas. Three Secretary Generals headed the party, many changes also occurred regarding the hierarchical structure of the party, and nothing seems to be able to put an end to this conflict.

In terms of Game Theories, the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel passed through two models: the Deterrence Model and the Spiral Model. The Deterrence Model reigned from 1992 until May 25, 2000 the date of the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. This model resembles a Chicken Game where both parties were able to avoid the crash in the exception of the years 1993 and 1996. The Spiral model was adopted after the withdrawal in 2000 and is still in place. This model resembles a Prisoners’ Dilemma game where the best outcome for both players lies in their cooperation. Hezbollah and Israel seem to have mastered this game but failed to do so in 2006.

Hezbollah and Israel proved during these years, especially from 1992 until 2006, to be perfect enemies, amassing a wealth of understanding of the norms, behavior and strategies of their counterpart. The conflict developed according to a set of norms that both players

respected. The first norm is that the conflict would remain between a state actor being Israel and a non-state actor being Hezbollah. The Lebanese state was marginalized during this conflict and did not face Israel military during those years. Moreover, the military operations of both players were not meant to lead into an escalation. Both players study very well their operations before conducting them in order to stay in a low-intensity warfare. Finally, Hezbollah made sure to limit most of its operations to the Lebanese lands where Israel or its Lebanese ally the SLA are present. Very few incidents took place outside of the security zone for instance.

However, this conflict is not exception-free and both players can sometimes bring the conflict to a higher level of intensity. In fact, between the years of 1992 and 2006, the conflict witnessed three full-scale wars between Hezbollah and Israel. These wars are considered to be exceptions since both players violated the norms presented previously. Both players behaved differently and their operations were of higher intensity.

The domestic, regional, and international contexts seemed to play a great role in the occurrence of the exceptions. For instance, periods where Hezbollah faced internal, regional, or international pressures led Israel to opt for the choice of war more easily.

The reasons that lead both parties to shift from the Norms-Mode into the Exceptions-Mode are various. They were summarized in this paper into four main causes. The first cause is the 'False Optimism' that a belligerent can become a victim of when he believes that the war to be conducted is easy and with low costs. The second cause is the 'Jumping the Gun' notion where a player believes he has an advantage of attacking first and taking the other by surprise. The third cause is the 'Power Shifts'. This happens when one of the belligerent consider the war to change the status quo to his favor and believes that attacking now is better than attacking later. The fourth cause is the 'Cumulative Resources' and it is when one of the

belligerents seeks after war in order to acquire more resources that can favor his position in the future.

Remaining within the stated norms or adopting new ones will depend on the events that will surround the evolution of this conflict. A more interesting approach going forward would be to look at the future of the conflict from what the theoretical models it abided by would state. Hence, staying within the Spiral model would mean that the arms race is only to be intensified and the occurrence of a new exception would lead to a more devastating outcome than what the conflict had witnessed previously. However, this would also mean that the borders between Lebanon and Israel will remain calmer than they used to be under the Deterrence model.

In contrast, going back to the deterrence model will slow the arms race and hinder the security dilemma. Hezbollah and Israel will readopt the 'eye for an eye' operations that marked the 1990's.

Choosing what model to be set in place is the choice of the belligerents, depending on what they perceive to be in their best interests. However, one should not neglect that the introduction of new norms could affect the model in place.

To conclude, the conflict seems doomed to perpetuation for the foreseeable future. Neither peace with Israel will take place soon, nor do any of the players seems able to completely destroy the other; something that they both wish to do. The future scenarios can vary according to many local, regional, and international factors and the fate of the conflict inevitably lies therein. However, until any of these scenarios occurs, one thing is sure for the time being: the conflict is self-perpetuating and mutually beneficial for both sides in the absence of eradication. If either Hezbollah or Israel did not exist, they would have certainly invented a close enough proxy to each other, after all they are still best enemies after all these years, and that is an achievement of its own.

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