



# HEZBOLLAH AFTER THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR

## HOW THE TAIF AGREEMENT CREATED A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY FOR THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF THE “PARTY OF GOD”

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كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ  
"EVERY SOUL SHALL TASTE DEATH"

*To my mom who laid the foundation for this thesis. To Jihad for the motivation.  
And to my dad who made it all possible.*

## **Abstract**

This paper examines Hezbollah in the wake of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and looks deeper into some of the major historical events that might have led to the emergence and the continued existence of the organization, specifically the signing of the Taif Agreement in 1989. The agreement led to a stronger Syrian presence in Lebanon, an important ally for Hezbollah empowering the organization even further, whilst all other Lebanese factions were still heavily affected by the deadly civil war. In addition to support from Iran and benefitting from the continued Israeli occupation of large areas in south Lebanon, Hezbollah managed to create a strong popular base for its activities using social services filling a vacuum left by the state. Using Joel Migdal's "state-in-society" theory, this paper tries to examine the relationship between Hezbollah and the Lebanese state, in order to understand whether the Taif Agreement was the crucial point in history that led to the development of Hezbollah from being a resistance movement, to one of the most important non-state actors in the Middle East.



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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Over the course of the last thirty years, Hezbollah, the party of God, has earned a reputation for being one of the most influential actors in the Middle East. Established in the wake of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), the party is today playing a key role in several international arenas including Syria, Iraq, Bahrain and Yemen. With ideological and economic support from Iran, and political support from Syria primarily achieved after the Taif Agreement that ended the civil war, Hezbollah has managed to build an array of institutions that hundreds of thousands of Lebanese citizens, mainly Shia Muslims, can rely on as an alternative to the Lebanese state.

The party's involvement in regional conflicts is affecting the political and economic situation in Lebanon, where the party has its base, and it is not just affecting Hezbollah. Last month, the Gulf Cooperation Council, an exclusive club for wealthy Arab Gulf States including Saudi Arabia and the UAE decided to label Hezbollah as a terrorist organization a designation already used by Israel, Canada and the United States, while the European Union has chosen only to label the military wing of the organization. The step was followed by a similar designation from the Arab League. The designation of a key component of the Lebanese government and of the Lebanese society has had huge consequences on the already weak country. Saudi Arabia has taken the step further and retracted billion-dollar investments from the country, due to what it calls "the terrorist behavior of Hezbollah". (Aslam, 2016)

More than 1.2 million Syrian refugees are currently registered in Lebanon creating enormous pressure on the country's economy, infrastructure, and demographic constellation. Several Lebanese cities have declared curfews for Syrian nationals after sunset, and the security situation in the country has been characterized by instability and car bombs in popular destinations. (Sadat, 2015, UNHCR, 2016) This is especially evident after the involvement of Hezbollah in the crackdown on insurgents in the Syrian Crisis, which increased

pressure on the Lebanese state, as it is no longer the only actor using force within Lebanese territory. Rebels have promised to move the battlefield into Lebanon whenever the chance is possible, and Daesh have detonated several car bombs in Lebanese territory leaving hundreds dead. Across the border to the south, Israeli experts are asserting that a new confrontation with Hezbollah is closer than ever, and will be more devastating than the July 2006 war that left Lebanon heavily damaged and politically destabilized. Increased pressure internally on Hezbollah has also demanded that the party hands over its arms to the state, and pulls its forces out of Syria. (Al-Arabiya, 2015, Ben-David, 2016)

There is no doubt that Hezbollah is currently going through one of the most critical periods since its rapid rise during the 1980s. However, the party still enjoys large popular support. 80 % of polled Shia Muslims in Lebanon believe that Hezbollah should continue to exist and even grow in size, and more than two thirds of Christians in Lebanon support the presence of Hezbollah in Syria (Haddad, 2006, al-Akhbar, 2014).

My motivation for writing this project arose from mainly two points. In 2000, my late mom started her thesis on Lebanon and the Christian role after the Lebanese Civil War. Busy with three children and leaving Denmark for a life in Lebanon with the rest of the family, the thesis process was postponed again and again. When she finally managed to collect enough empirical data to start writing, sickness struck her and she passed away. Here, some sixteen years after the beginning of the process, I have thoroughly read the material that she managed to assemble, in order to examine what her focus was at that time. As I read the material, it became clear that Hezbollah started to gain an increasing role in her research. At the time of her death in 2004, Hezbollah was transforming from mainly being a resistance movement fighting the Israeli presence in south Lebanon into a political party that had large popular support among the Lebanese public along with members of parliament and government representatives. My mother's assessment of Hezbollah, even as

early as 2000, has proven to be an accurate one, as Hezbollah's role in recent events in Lebanon has been of great importance.

This leads to my second point, which is my curiosity about how Hezbollah managed to increase its popular support and gain influence in the Lebanese society after the Taif Agreement to such an extent that it exceeds the influence of any other Lebanese actor, even the state. It also revolved around how the emergence of Hezbollah can be assigned to the support it received from key regional players and whether the Taif Agreement managed to create some kind of 'window of opportunity' that, the organization took advantage of, in order to increase its presence in Lebanon.

Considering my own motivation, this project will try to answer the following problem formulation:

*How has the Taif Agreement created a 'window of opportunity' for Hezbollah to gain increased influence within the Lebanese state?*

Hezbollah's position today is undoubtedly of great importance for the whole region. I will therefore seek to answer the following questions about Hezbollah's position within the Lebanese society, and its emergence as one of the world's premier violent non-state actors:

- (a) How did events during the Lebanese Civil War lead to the emergence of Hezbollah?;*
- (b) How did the Taif Agreement affect Hezbollah's position with the Lebanese society, and did Iranian and Syrian sponsorship contribute to Hezbollah's continuity?; and*
- (c) To what extent did Hezbollah's success depend on both popular support within Lebanon and the fragility of the Lebanese state?*

## Methodology

In order to shed light on the above-mentioned problem formulation and the related questions, it is necessary to define the methodological framework that this project will adopt, while taking the complexity of Lebanese politics into consideration. I will therefore start with a brief presentation of the key actors in the Lebanese Civil War and thereafter give the reader a brief insight into key historical events that I believe might have had an effect on the emergence and the continued existence of Hezbollah. After the presentation, a historical analysis of Hezbollah will take place. The analysis will be inspired from the historical presentation seen in relation to Hezbollah's domestic development and its relation to the points stated in the Taif Agreement. Finally, the relationship between Hezbollah and the Lebanese State will be examined using Joel Migdal's 'state-in-society' theory to determine whether this might have had any effect on the continued strong presence, influence and public support that Hezbollah enjoys.

### Methodological considerations and literature review

When reading about Lebanon and the civil war, I realized that the amount of literature available on the topic is overwhelming, and it was therefore essential to sort out the needed information and figure out what information could be left out, mainly due to time and space limits. I have therefore made the following considerations regarding the literature used:

With respect to the historical events highlighted in this project, I have chosen a set of events that I believe have had an effect on how Hezbollah emerged and continues to exist. This belief stems from extensive research that I have conducted through reading many different narratives of the civil war and the period after. This project serves to have a retrospective take on the historical development of Hezbollah. What I found, is that every actor involved in the civil war, has maintained a narrative that they believed to be the "truth". The Christian parties have justified their actions as being a defense for the right to be Christian in an increasingly more Muslim world, while Hezbollah has

justified their continuous possession of arms as being of a defensive character against any future Israeli assault on Lebanon. Hezbollah's narrative also entails that the organization is the only actor in Lebanon that can defend the country's borders effectively and defend against insurgents coming from Syria—a task that even the state cannot achieve.

This "truth" is the result of power relations that exist within society, as Foucault explains. Foucault states that these power relations can be based on violence that leaves all other possibilities out, except of the "truth" that the involved powerful party wants. (Philp, 1985) This can be seen when the state endorses the presence of Hezbollah's military presence in south Lebanon, although the state should have monopoly over violence within its territory. Hezbollah has thus made the state (and the population at large) its narrative. With this, Hezbollah has had a continuous need of adapting its narrative so that it is accepted among both the state and the population, which is evident historically and thus is reflected in the chosen literature.

The literature used in this project has been carefully selected, as the literature available on Lebanon in general is plentiful. However, finding literature that dealt with Hezbollah's position during and after the civil war has been a challenge. The works of Hassan Krayem, Ph.D. in Political Science and Professor of political science at the American University of Beirut (AUB), in addition to analyses from Kiserwani (AUB) and Parle (Oklahoma State University) have played a vital role in explaining both the events that led to the eruption of the civil war as well as to clarifying the role of minorities in Lebanon -- especially the Shiite and the Maronite positions. The work of Robert Fisk ('The Independent' journalist) in his "Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War" has also been helpful in understanding the dynamics of the Lebanese society and the different alliances that have been made (and broken) between Lebanese actors and international players. However, I have decided not to include his work too much in this project, as his opinions are often subjective rather than objective. His work should be seen as a kind of personal account

of his journeys in the Middle East rather than being academic literature. On Hezbollah, I've used experts such as Matthew Levitt, (who is known for his close relations to both American and Israeli intelligence services) Judith Palmer Harik (AUB), Bryan Early (University of Albany), Augustus Richard Norton (University of Boston, Imad Salamey (Lebanese American University), Adham Saouli (University of St Andrews and University of Edinburgh) and others.

#### Demarcations

Due to the complexity of the situation in Lebanon and its neighboring countries, it has been crucial to delimit the subject due to both time and space boundaries. This project will therefore address the period prior to the civil war briefly, in order to explain the historical relationship between key components of the Lebanese society and how internal relations might have assisted in creating a context for Hezbollah to be established in. A brief introduction to the key players in the civil war will be introduced, but not in detail. Thereafter, this project will seek to address historical events during and after the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) to clarify and highlight how Lebanon was at the end of the civil war and how internal as well as external causes have led to the continued existence of Hezbollah, seen in the light of the Taif Agreement, in addition to the relationship between the Lebanese state and Hezbollah.

It would have been interesting to involve other aspects of the Lebanese society or even have regional players and developments play a more significant role in the project, but this would only have made the project unmanageable and vague, especially due to the space limits. Specifically, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its consequences on the level of societal demographics, refugees, and creation of national proxies would have been interesting to analyze. However, this aspect has been left out. Other aspects include the Syrian role in Lebanon and the consequences and implications of the Syrian conflict on the Lebanese society, and the possibilities of having a "Lebanese solution" to the Syrian conflict.

Other demarcations include the use of discourse analysis to explain why the Taif Agreement succeeded where other agreements failed, and a socio-economic discussion of the impact of refugees on the country and region.

### Theoretical approach

The following will introduce the reader to the theoretical approach adopted in this project. It will also include an introduction to the different theories applied and how they are connected to the subject and how the problem formulation mentioned above will be approached and answered.

### State-in-Society

The Lebanese Civil War was characterized by the chaos and the inability of the government to enforce its legitimacy over all Lebanese territories. The Druze militias ruled over the mountains southeast of Beirut. The Maronite militias ruled the area from eastern Beirut and in the mountains north of Beirut. (Harik, 2004) Israeli proxies ruled in the south, while Beirut was a warzone where nearly all involved parties tried to take control of the city at one point of the war. Harik and Krayem argue that the Lebanese state was at the brink of collapse, were it not for the signing of the Taif Agreement in 1989. (Harik, 2004, Krayem, 1997)

In recent years, Hezbollah has grown to become stronger than any other authority in Lebanon; hence, the party has continuously been designated the term “State-in-Society”. The concept of ‘State-in-Society’ will be used to examine the relationship between Hezbollah and the Lebanese state, and what role the Taif Agreement has had. This concept will help in showing whether the state has the ability or not to keep control over its society and face the growing influence of other organizations within the state, which pose an internal challenge to the state and threaten its social control.

The state is usually considered to be the most natural entity that forms the world’s political landscape. The idea that a state is a homogenous and powerful entity seems to have been widely accepted (Migdal 1988: 15). This

view has been reinforced with the creation of the United Nations, in which states are the *raison d'être* of the international organization.

According to the Montevideo Convention of 1933:

*“The state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: a ) a permanent population; b ) a defined territory; c ) government; and d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states.”*

*(Montevideo Convention, 1933)*

While the Montevideo Convention sets four essential characteristics of a state, Weber states that a state should be seen as a “human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (Schöpfer, 2015).

Joel Migdal sees both definitions as completing each other. According to him, such a homogenous definition of the state does not represent the reality but is an “ideal-type” of a state. Migdal challenges this definition by considering the state as one organization among many in the society (Migdal 2001: 14-15, Migdal 1988: 28). According to Migdal, the society is not a uniform entity but is seen as a “mélange of social organizations” composed of heterogeneous groups exercising power (Migdal 1988: 28). The objective of every social organization, states included, is to make people adhere to their organization by either offering them rewards or by sanctioning them. While rewards usually take the form of material needs such as food, housing, or social security, sanctions are linked to potential violence from the state that individuals might face (Migdal 1988: 29). The choices individuals make in favor of one organization or another can be defined as the strategies of survival. Such decisions will not only provide a basis for personal survival, but will also link the individual’s personal identity to a group identity (Migdal 1988: 29). By providing strategies of survival to individuals, states can increase their level of social control. Migdal defines state social control as “the subordination of

people's own inclination of social behavior or behavior sought by other social organizations in favor of the behavior prescribed by state rules" (Migdal 1988: 22). There are three indicators that reflect the level of social control: compliance, participation and legitimacy.

1. Compliance: The concept of compliance indicates that the population respects and acts conformingly to the state's demands and in case of non-compliance, the state can make use of sanctions. The ability to sanction will determine the degree to which a state can demand compliance.
2. Participation: The participation of the population in the state organization is wanted by states. Participation reflects the acceptance of the population of the state-authorized institutions.
3. Legitimacy: The term legitimacy is the acceptance and approval of the state's rules of the game as true and right (Migdal 1988: 32).

The more social control a state can enact on its population, the more *capabilities* it can develop (Migdal 1988: 22). Migdal defines capabilities as "the capacities to penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in determined ways" (Migdal 1988: 4). Capabilities are a central aspect to designate a state as weak or strong, as it depends on whether a state has high capabilities to complete its tasks or not (Migdal 1988: 4). Increased capabilities of the state are closely related to increased state social control which will enable the state to mobilize the population, politically as well as militarily (Migdal 1988: 23). Migdal does not take state capabilities as given but considers them deeply dependent on the struggle for social control (Migdal 1988: 261). Just like states cannot be considered fixed entities, neither can societies. "Societies are constantly becoming as a result of these struggles over social control" (Migdal 2001: 50, 57). A society should not only be seen as it is "but as it becomes, has become in the past, is becoming in the present and may become in the future" (Migdal 2001: 23).

The “State-in-Society” theory will be used to examine what characterizes Hezbollah’s relation to the Lebanese state and how this might have had an impact on the increased influence of the organization, especially after the Taif Agreement. The three parameters that will be used are *compliance*, *participation* and *legitimacy*. Other aspects of Migdal’s theory will not be used.

#### Parties involved in the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990)

In order to understand the reasons behind the emergence of Hezbollah, it is essential to have an insight into the context that Hezbollah was created in. The answer to the questions raised above would be flawed- if the reader did not have a solid introduction to how Lebanon was at the time of Hezbollah’s establishment and what dynamics existed within the Lebanese society and what external factors were present. Different actors have exercised power and in many cases taken over the role of the state during the civil war, as the state has been too weak. (Krayem, 1997, Early, 2006)

The following will therefore introduce the reader to key actors in the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and their relationship with each other, as this will help in examining how Hezbollah used the Taif Agreement as a stepping-stone for gaining more influence.

It is important to acknowledge that the period prior to the civil war was characterized by a political, economic and social stagnation, especially among Lebanese Shias. Urban migration, increased labor and student unrests, in addition to slow social and economic reforms destabilized the country, while political leadership was missing. Tension between different parties increased and was symbolized by a progressive-conservative cleavage in the country. (Hudson, 1978)

A few landowning families that had distributed key positions amongst themselves dominated the political and economic life. Transformations within the Lebanese society challenged those ruling families and their positions. This

lead to the undermining of the authority that they presented and permitted nearly all political and religious groups to start an arms race. (Reilly, 1982)

The large influx of Palestinian refugees after the 1967 war, and the increased Palestinian attacks on newly established Israel pressured the Lebanese government. Parts of society supported the Palestinians while others, mainly Christian Maronites, saw the Palestinian presence as a threat to their very existence. (Reilly, 1982) The following shows the different parties involved in the Lebanese Civil War:

#### *The Lebanese Front:*

The rightwing Lebanese Front (LF) was mainly of a monosectarian character as its leaders, as well as its followers, were primarily Christian Maronites. The Maronite community composed of middleclass citizens and peasants benefited largely from the existing system, which might explain why many Maronites joined the ranks of the LF. The leading political and economic positions were reserved for the Maronite community as agreed upon in historical agreements. The ideology of the LF was mainly Lebanese Christian nationalism as an opposition to the Arab nationalism represented in the Lebanese National Movement (elaborated below). The LF usually portrayed the Christians in Lebanon as a minority within an Arab world that had to fight for the preservation of its identity. The LF created an umbrella organization called Lebanese Forces that included all the major Christian Maronite militias. (Reilly, 1982, Krayem 1997)

#### *Al-Kataeb:*

The most powerful component of the LF was the Phalangist Party (al-Kataeb), which was founded by Pierre Gemayel in 1936. Al-Kataeb was a “modern, disciplined political organization with a well-developed ideology of Lebanese nationalism” (Reilly, 1982). The party would destroy rivaling groups from the political right in order to enjoy the monopoly of power within the Lebanese Front.

Other components include President Camille Chamouns Ahrar/Tigers and President Suleyman Franjiehs Almarada Brigade, who both suffered under the aggression of al-Kataeb and the dominating character of its leadership.

#### *The Lebanese National Movement:*

Contrary to the LF, the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) was a movement that included different sets of ideologies and religious groups. The movement comprised of the Nasserites, pan-Syrian nationalists, Ba'thists and communists. They highlighted their common goals in a joint declaration adopted in 1975, where "breaking with the monopoly" of the so-called "four percent class" that made up the political and economic elite was a key element. (Reilly, 1982) Other goals included the transformation of Lebanon into a 'rational and democratic state' (Reilly, 1982). According to Reilly, Ph.D. in History, the declaration was a sign of aspiration by Muslim and non-Maronite Christians to get influence on the political, economic, and social aspects of society and to break away from the sectarian system that was created during the previous 100 years. (Reilly, 1982)

#### *The Progressive Socialist Party*

A mainly Druze party, headed by the charismatic Kamal Jumblatt- who was assassinated early in the civil war. His son took over the leadership and is still head of party today. At the beginning of the civil war, Jumblatt emerged as the overall leader of the progressive coalition, and played a vital role in the so-called "Mountain War" between Druze and Christians.

#### *The Nasserite Movement*

Affiliated with a social, nationalist Arab political ideology based on the thoughts and politics of Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt. The movement had a military wing called the Murabitun, which was powerful in Beirut's Sunni Muslim neighborhoods. (Reilly, 1982)

#### *The Syrian Social National Party*

Primarily gained support from Orthodox Christians in Beirut and areas in the north. The primary objective of the Syrian Social national Party was to create

stronger ties to neighboring Syria. Ties that should lead to the creation of a “Greater Syria” where Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Syria became one country.

Other components of the LNM included different communist parties that managed to attract followers from all Lebanese religious sects.

#### The Movement of the Deprived (Amal)

The Shiite community was kept outside the political formation of the Lebanese state in 1943, which kept the Shiites in Lebanon marginalized and deprived of their social and political rights. (Siklawi, 2012). There was therefore a need to gather the Shiite community in one faction that could oppose the other religious and political groups. The Iranian cleric of Lebanese descent Musa al-Sadr organized and mobilized the Shiite community into a movement called the Movement of the Deprived. The creation of a militia wing called “Amal” within the movement meant more involvement in the civil war. The movement demanded a Lebanon for all Lebanese including all its religious sects, which meant its relationship to the other parties changed throughout the civil war. (Siklawi, 2012)

#### The Palestinians

Most Palestinian refugees came in 1948 after the creation of Israel, and the camps where the refugees lived quickly became centers for the Palestinian armed struggle against Israel and its allies. (Reilly, 1982) The Palestinians became the main threat to the Lebanese Front as Maronites saw the Palestinians as a threat to the demographic constellation of the country. The Palestinians sought alliances with the Lebanese progressive forces and therefore had a close relationship with the FLM.

Rightwing parties often argue that the Palestinians are the main reason behind the civil war. According to Reilly, a “more accurate assessment is that the Palestinians strengthened those forces in Lebanon which were organizing to change the status quo”. (Reilly, 1982)

Other players include the United States, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Iran and Israel. Several scholars (Rowayheb, Ghosn, Khoury among others) argue that the Lebanese Civil War should be designated as a proxy war, where the aforementioned countries all supported different parties and religious groups based on their own national interests. However, this project will deal with religious disputes as the main cause behind the eruption of the civil war.

In addition to the above players, one player specifically stands out. Whereas all Lebanese militias were required to hand over their weapons to the Lebanese Army after the civil war, Hezbollah was allowed to keep its arms and continued its armed resistance against the Israeli presence in south Lebanon and thereby challenge the legitimacy of the Lebanese army. Today, Hezbollah is a key player at both the national and regional level.

## Chapter 2

### Historical context

The following part will give the reader a brief but solid insight into the context that Hezbollah was created in. In order to understand how the Taif Agreement has shaped the politics in Lebanon, it is important to understand what major events led to the formation of the agreement that ended 15 years of war and manifested Hezbollah as a national and regional player.

### Lebanon prior to the civil war

*“The (Lebanese) system has always had plenty of freedom but suffered from a lack of democracy”*

– Salim El-Hoss, Former Prime Minister of Lebanon

Prior to the civil war, Lebanon was frequently described as being “the most stable democracy” in the Arab world, but in relation to the above-mentioned quote by the former prime minister of Lebanon, Salim El-Hoss, the Lebanese system was lacking political accountability and political responsibility. (Krayem, 1997) The system ensures equal rights and opportunities for its citizens, but the political system was built using a unique confessional model, where every major sect gets different political and administrative functions allocated. (Krayem, 1997)

Ottoman domination over large parts of the Middle East and especially Lebanon meant that the Sunni sect was being favored over its Shiite and Christian Maronite counterparts. (Khashan, 2012) Neither the Shiites nor Maronites felt comfortable under the Ottoman presence, while Sunnis relegated both communities to inferior social status. Both communities found relative freedom in their mountain enclaves although they occasionally suffered from the lack of services and many were denied education, especially in the case of the Shiites. (Khashan, 2012) The Shiites were less fortunate since they did not have their own religious establishment to take care of basic communal needs. The Sunni Ottoman state did not even recognize a separate communal status for the Shiites. Many Shiite clerics had modest education,

and they generally had little impact on the affairs of the community. (Khashan, 2012)

After the end of World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Grand Liban was formed, under strong French presence, as a single unit including many of the areas found in today's Lebanon. (Salem, 1991: 74-75) The increase in size and incorporation of more areas, especially the coastal cities, led to a change in the demographic composition. Muslims who had different political, economic and social orientations, and preferences primarily populated the new areas. (Salem, 1991: 75) The change meant that the Maronites only made up 30 % of the population (as opposed to being 60 % before Grand Liban), while Sunni and Shia Muslims made up 40 % of the population in Grand Liban. The remaining percentage was divided across 15 other sects that include Druze, Greek Orthodox, and Greek Catholics. (Salem, 1991: 75)

This change made it difficult for one religion or sect to dominate the political scene. However, the Maronites continued to play a significant role in both the political and administrative aspects of the new entity thanks to support from European countries. (Krayem, 1997) This created opposition among Muslims who wanted their share of power. The Muslims especially wanted to detach Lebanon (and hereby the Maronites) from the close relations with France, and instead strengthen the bonds with the neighboring Arab countries. (Krayem, 1997)

#### [First constitution and the National Pact](#)

The first Lebanese constitution was signed in 1926, while Lebanon was still under French rule, despite some opposition from the Muslim population. The constitution transformed Lebanon into a democratic state with parliamentary elections aimed at securing the rights of all religious groups. The parliamentary system was built on a confessional system that distributed members of parliament proportionally between the different religious sects, thereby preventing future religious clashes. The system thus greatly relied on cooperation between the different religious groups, as custom was. However,

it was not until 1943 and the introduction of the National Pact, that the system was manifested and became institutionalized. (Kisirwani & Parle, 1987)

The National Pact came during a time where the Muslim leadership was divided into two opposing groups. The first group wanted a closer relationship to Syria, while the second group wanted an independent nation that could have closer relations to all Arab nations alike. Nevertheless, they quickly realized that creating an entity with strong relations to the surrounding countries, without the acceptance of the Christian populations would only make things worse. (Krayem, 1997, Khalaf et. all, 1991 )

The Christian leadership was also split. Their dilemma consisted of the fear of being oppressed and eventually disappearing as a Christian minority in the Arab world, but also with respect to the degree of dependency wanted from international powers like France. (Krayem, 1997, Khalaf et. all, 1991)

The National Pact was an unwritten agreement between the two major groupings in the Lebanese society at that time. The first group was the Maronites representing all Christians and represented by then President Bishara al-Khoury. The second group was the Sunni group representing all Muslims. The group was represented by Prime Minister Riad al-Sulh. Again, the Shiite community did not have any influence on the course of action. (Khalaf et. all, 1991: 39)

The agreement is essential in order to understand today's Lebanese politics, as it was the first time that the two groups, the Christians and the Muslims, agreed on a set of issues. Firstly, Lebanon should be seen as a neutral, sovereign, and independent entity in the Middle East, having an Arab character. Secondly, al-Khoury and al-Sulh agreed that Lebanon would not seek unity with neighboring Syria nor the Arab world as such. Lebanon should also refrain from pursuing special ties to France or the West. The National Pact also manifested a confessional formula for the representation of Christians and Muslims in parliament. (Khalaf et. all, 1991: 39-42) The magical ratio of six

Christians to five Muslims was thus established. The agreement also entailed that the President should be a Maronite, the Prime minister should be a Sunni and the Speaker of the House should be a Shiite. (Salem, 1991: 75-76) The representation formula assigned the dominant role in the political life to the Maronite sect and gave the Maronite president the ultimate executive authority without creating any accountability mechanisms that could hold the president accountable for his actions. Maronites were also assigned to occupy key ministries, major positions in the army and in courts, including Commander-in-Chief of the army, President of the Court of Cassation (highest judicial position in the Lebanese Republic), and the position of the Director-General of both the internal security and intelligence forces and the position as Governor of the Central Bank. A domination in society that, in the long run, increased dissatisfaction amongst the other religious sects. (Salem, 1991: 75-76) The Pact also excluded and marginalized the Shiites as most of the resources of the Lebanese political system were divided between Maronites and Sunnis, although the Shiite population was soon to become the largest minority in the country. (Khashan, 2012) The National Pact was thereby the keystone to future conflicts in Lebanon, as the agreement linked access to leading positions in the administrative sector with the religious background of potential candidates. (Salem, 1991: 76)

However, it also managed to keep the country conflict-free for almost three decades (Khalaf, 1991:42-43) The period after the National Pact was peaceful, thus the designation of Lebanon as “the most stable democracy” in the Middle East. The country saw political stability and economic prosperity; however, the distribution of wealth was uneven, as it was mainly Beirut and other areas with a large share of Maronites that were developed while the south with its Shiite population and the border-area with Syria with its mainly Sunni residents stayed undeveloped, again creating tension between the different layers of society. (Krayem, 1997)

### Rise of tension: political, economic and social decline

When the Christian president Camille Chamoun wanted to extend his presidential term despite the law forbidding a third presidential term, disputes occurred between Muslims and Christians. (Krayem, 1997) The increasing inequality between Muslim and Christian communities helped fuel the disagreements between the different parts of society, as many Muslims had moved to the larger cities to search for job opportunities. When Camille Chamoun refused to cut diplomatic relations with the West as a response to the Suez Crisis in 1956, anger from mainly Muslim groups emerged putting pressure on the government. (Krayem, 1997, Fisk, 1990)

In the 1970s, various internal tensions inherent to the Lebanese system and multiple regional developments continued to contribute to the breakdown of governmental authority and the outbreak of civil strife in 1975 (Krayem, 1997). The strike of Muslim fishermen in Sidon in early 1975 against Chamoun's attempt to take control of fishing rights along the Lebanese coastline ended in the assassination of the prominent Sidon politician Maarouf Saad, who had fought for the rights of the poor. The government was losing grip of the situation. (Jones, 2012:29)

Tension escalated, especially between the Lebanese Christian Phalange party and Palestinian fighters, and ended up with multiple military confrontations. The most notable one was when Phalange fighters ambushed a bus in Ain-al-Rummaneh in Beirut on April 13, 1975, killing 27 passengers, most of them Palestinians. The attack is regarded as "the spark that ignited the Lebanese Civil War". (Fisk, 1990) Just a few months after, in what was later called 'Black Saturday', four Christians were found shot dead in east Beirut. Bashir Gemayel, the leader of the Phalange militia, ordered retaliations resulting in around 40 Muslim men being stopped at Christian roadblocks and thereafter murdered. Muslim militias retaliated in a similar fashion and by the end of the day, about 300 Muslims and 300 Christians had been murdered, and the Lebanese Civil War was thus officially started. Previously, the Israeli army had carried out

several raids over the Israeli-Lebanese border as a response to Palestinian missile attacks. (*Aljazeera, 2009*)

#### The Lebanese Civil War

The Lebanese National Movement (LNM) in collaboration with their Palestinian allies, managed to win several key battles in the first couple of years of the Lebanese Civil War. However, the Syrian military intervention in 1976, in order to support the Lebanese Front (LF), halted their plans and their political influence declined with the assassination of Kamal Junblatt in 1977. According to Hassan Krayem from the American University of Beirut, the assassination was a turning point for the once very leftist movement. The decrease in political influence and the losses on the battlefield made it more appealing to create alliances with the more traditional Islamic parties in the country. The movement therefore gave up its demand of the “*total abolition of political confessionalism*” and shifted focus towards a compromise where the redistribution of confessional power should reflect the demographic changes in society. (Krayem, 1997)

In the period 1976 to 1982, the Lebanese state under President Elias Sarkis undertook various initiatives (creating combined committees between the rivaling parties, joint dialogue sessions) to find a negotiated settlement to the Lebanese conflict, but none succeeded. Meanwhile, the Lebanese Front was gradually strengthening its position and awaiting favorable regional developments to impose its own will. (Salem, 1990) During this period, the LNM was too dependent on the Palestinians and unable to initiate a political negotiation process or participate in providing an effective solution to the civil war. The Shiite cleric, Musa al-Sadr, organized and mobilized the Shiite community into “The Movement of the Deprived”, Amal, a social and ideological movement that played a significant role during the civil war with its close ties to the Syrian regime. (Haddad, 2006)

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was a stunning blow to the LNM and especially to the Palestinian forces. The Israelis were welcomed with rice and

flowers in many southern villages where Palestinians had intimidated and spread fear amongst Shiites (Norton, 2007). The Lebanese Front took advantage of the situation and installed Bashir Gemayel as president. However, he was assassinated within days of the inauguration ceremony and was replaced by his brother Amin Gemayel. Gemayel tried to legitimize the Israeli presence in south Lebanon, but the strong opposition to the American brokered Lebanese-Israeli agreement from May 1984 meant that the Israelis had to withdraw from most of the occupied territories. The Israelis installed a surrogate called South Lebanon Army compositing of former Lebanese Army soldiers that controlled large areas of south Lebanon. The Israelis and their proxies soon ran into resistance from their surroundings in the south. The Lebanese government approached Syria's Hafez al-Assad in order to regain control over some of its territory and the Syrians thereby gained much influence on Lebanese politics in the years to come. (Krayem, 1997)

Sectarianism and confessional segregation increased with the intensification of the fighting, especially in the Mountain War mainly between Druze and Christians. As Krayem states:

*"In the "Christian areas" the militias spread slogans of a "Christian republic," "Christian security," federalism and partition. In the "Muslim areas," the emerging radical Islamic movements raised the slogans of an Islamic republic."*  
(Krayem, 1997)

Several attempts were made to end the civil war, especially after the Israeli invasion of 1982, but they all failed to achieve progress. In 1983, the participants only managed to agree on the issue of Lebanon's Arab identity. Syria tried to use its increasing influence on the Lebanese parties and managed to broker an agreement known as the Tripartite Agreement in 1985, which included political reforms and 'special' relations with Syria that would end the conflict. The most dominant militias on the ground, the Druze Progressive Socialist Party, the Amal Movement and the Christian Lebanese Forces, accepted the agreement. However, a coup against the Lebanese Forces' leader

Elie Hobeika ended in the termination of the agreement, and the continuity of the civil war. (Fisk 1990, Salem 1991, Krayem, 1997)

#### The need for political settlement

After the assassination of Prime Minister Rashid Karami in 1987, political deadlock froze all attempts to bring the opposing parties closer. Salim al-Hoss was elected Prime Minister, while Gemayel's presidential term was coming to an end. At the end of Gemayel's term, in September 1988, the failure to elect a new president led to political vacuum that threatened to lead to partition. Gemayel appointed an interim cabinet headed by Army Commander Michel Aoun, a rising star who gained massive popular support, with the authority of the cabinet in predominantly Christian areas; while Salim al-Hoss' cabinet continued to be seen as legitimate in west Beirut and other parts of the country. (Fisk 1990, Salem 1991, Krayem, 1997) Gemayel thereby broke the non-written agreement between the different Lebanese fractions that the prime minister should be a Sunni Muslim. The executive authority in the country was split between a military government headed by Aoun and a civilian government headed by al-Hoss. (Krayem, 1997) Lebanon's political system was thus at stake as the two governments were competing and a constitutional vacuum occurred. The predominantly Muslim forces led by al-Hoss insisted that political reforms should precede the election of a president, while their opponents demanded that the reverse order should happen before other steps could be taken. (Norton, 1991) plausible.

In this period, Hezbollah had emerged as a resistance movement only participating in the fight against the Israeli occupation of several areas of Lebanon. The party refused to participate in internal fighting with other Lebanese components except against the Israeli proxies. (Early, 2006) From the moment of its creation in 1982, and the formation as a coherent organization in 1985, Hezbollah emphasized its contrast to other Lebanese parties, particularly the Amal movement, as they had turned out to be more of a secular movement, while Hezbollah wanted to be portrayed as a religious

organization that embraced the Iranian revolution and its model for clerical rule. (Early, 2006)

At the meantime, Aoun tried to work actively for his own presidential candidacy, but feelers with key players on the Lebanese scene came back negative. (Salem, 1991, Krayem, 1997) The Syrians who had increased influence on major parties wanted a president whom they could influence towards their own benefits, while the Americans opposed having a military man in the presidential office, as the situation was in several other neighboring countries. (Salem, 1991, Krayem, 1997) While in office as prime minister, Aoun tried to enforce the law, as he saw himself as the most legitimate institution in the country. These attempts made him popular among large parts of society, while it triggered opposition from other militias. His crackdown on the militias control of seaports along the coastal line, and his eagerness to return them to the state, caused increased tension between him and the Shi'ite Amal movement and the Druze PSP, as well as the latter's Syrian supporters. (Salem, 1991:66-67)

Events escalated further when Aoun and the Lebanese army troops, which he controlled began the so-called "War of Liberation" in 1989, against the presence of all foreign forces in Lebanon. The effort was directed against the Syrian presence in the country. The 'war', strongly supported by Iraq, caused massive damage to the country's infrastructure in addition to thousands of casualties. (Salem, 1991:66-67) It also caused an increase of Syrian presence in Lebanon, contrary to the objectives. The areas that were under Aoun's authority experienced siege and large numbers of inhabitants emigrated from these areas. (Krayem, 1997)

War also broke out between Aoun and his former allies, the Lebanese Forces that were led by Samir Geagea, while the two major Shiite forces, the Amal Movement and Hezbollah, also had infightings. Hezbollah was trying to establish itself as a force to be reckoned with, as the Lebanese Civil War was

coming to an end, succeeding in manifesting itself in both southern suburbs of Beirut and in the Bekaa Valley. The inter-Maronite and inter-Shia wars were destructive in battle and had great political turnouts. (Krayem, 1997) The wars had generated intense international and regional attention and efforts were made to find an ending to the Lebanese crisis.

#### Formation of the Taif Agreement

Despite increased chaos, the chances for a political settlement looked better than ever. The infightings eroded the capacities of the two largest religious communities, singly or together, to effectively reject or alter the political compromise, represented by the Taif Agreement, that had been reached and was in the process of implementation (Laurent, 1991:99-100).

Due to massive international and regional interference, in addition to the devastating 'War of Liberation' initiated by Aoun, the needed conditions for negotiating an agreement were in place. Developments at the regional and international level, especially the increased Iraqi-Syrian tension and the run up to the First Gulf War, created an atmosphere that favored a political agreement to the situation in Lebanon. (Krayem, 1997) Internally, dissatisfaction among public opinion arose after the devastation of both the War of Liberation and the inter-confessional fighting. The general view was that none of the militias could decisively win the war, and that a compromise was the only solution in order to ensure a united entity with a central political system. (Krayem, 1997)

In 1989, such conditions were available, and therefore, the 62 members of the Lebanese parliament elected in the 1972 elections, who were still alive (original number was 99), travelled to Taif in Saudi Arabia where they discussed the national reconciliation process. Most of the discussions were based on the previous work agreed on in the Tripartite Agreement. After much consultation with Syria, Saudi Arabia, the United States and various Lebanese leaders, the members of parliament reached an agreement on October 22, 1989 and presented the Taif Agreement. The agreement was welcomed by the

US and the USSR and the UN Security Council supported the agreement and the Lebanese authority that resulted from it. (Krayem, 1997) The Lebanese Civil War was officially over.

The above description of the broad lines of the Lebanese Civil War clearly shows that the conflict is not just between the state and a rebel group within society, but that multiple actors, both national and international actors were involved in the conflict. Religious fractionalization and political marginalization seems to be the main cause of the civil war, as seen in the conflicts between Christians and Muslims, although personal interests and ambitions, as seen with Chamoun or Aoun's presidential ambitions, also played an important role in igniting and extending the conflict. External intervention also played a significant role in provoking, prolonging and at last ending the civil war. Example of this is the Palestinian presence that provoked a Christian response, the Israeli invasion that provoked a response from Hezbollah, or the Syrian presence that prolonged the war with Aoun and at last ensured that the war was ended with support from Saudi Arabia and the United States. The description also shows that especially Syrian influence on Lebanon has increased in recent years, and that especially the Shiite population was marginalized for many years prior to the eruption of the civil war, despite it being the largest minority in Lebanon.

The context in which Hezbollah was established and maintained with the signing of the Taif Agreement was thus characterized by i) political, economic and social marginalization of Shiite population in Lebanon, ii) weakness of nearly all Lebanese actors, and iii) great Syrian, Iranian and Israeli presence in Lebanon.

## Chapter 3

### Taif and the emergence of Hezbollah as a key player in domestic and international politics

*“When we entered Lebanon... there was no Hezbollah. We were accepted with perfumed rice and flowers by the Shia in the south. It was our presence there that created Hezbollah.”*  
- Ehud Barak Israeli defense minister (Norton, 2007)

The following will elaborate more on the consequences of the Taif Agreement and on how and why Hezbollah has developed to becoming one of the most influential organizations in Lebanon and in the region, seen in the light of the Taif Agreement. The primary focus will be to try to explain Hezbollah's emergence based on 1) the previous historical events and what they meant for the situation in Lebanon, 2) the Taif Agreement and what it entailed with respect to Hezbollah's position within the Lebanese society and at last 3) on Migdal's theoretical approach of a “State-in-Society” as stated in the theoretical framework. The influence of external actors will also be used in order to shed light on their role.

After the adoption of the Taif Agreement, Syrian troops continued to be present in the country. The Syrian government was even tasked in the agreement itself with *“thankfully assist[ing] the forces of the legitimate Lebanese government to spread the authority of the State of Lebanon”* over all Lebanese territories. (Fernandez, 2014)

According to Salem, the *“Taif Agreement shifted power from the office of the (Maronite) President to that of the (Sunni) Prime Minister”* (Salem, 1991). The agreement was according to Fisk, *“engineered by the Saudis to favour their Sunni Muslim co-religionists in Lebanon.”* (Fernandez, 2014). The President was stripped from most of the executive powers that he had, and was after the agreement reduced to a ceremonial figure who *“reigns but does not rule”*. (Salem, 1991) Salem also states that *“(...) the Taif Agreement has just replaced one vice with another, overcompensating for Christian dominance through the*

*President in the old system with a Muslim dominance through the Prime minister in the new system.” (Salem, 1991:79)*

Although all communities and religious sects are now represented in what is called the ‘Council of Ministers’ (the government), political paralysis, especially in the decision-making process-, is an eminent problem, as every decision requires the consensus of a large majority to pass. Accountability of the government is also even harder now, with the absence of any presidential mechanisms that can be enforced. The agreement also strengthened the position of the Shiite Speaker of Parliament at the expense of the Maronite Presidents authority. (Salem: 1991)

A revision of the distribution of members of parliament was also implemented. The ratio of Christian members of parliament to that of Muslim members went from 6:5 to half-and-half with seats subsequently divided *“proportionately between the denominations of each sect”* and *“proportionately between the districts.”* (Fernandez, 2014). See table 1 for more details.

Sect	Before Taif	After Taif
Maronite Catholic	30	34
Eastern Orthodox	11	14
Melkite Catholic	6	8
Armenian Orthodox	4	5
Armenian Catholic	1	1
Protestant	1	1
Other Christian Minorities	1	1

<b>Total Christians</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>64</b>
Sunni	20	27
Shiite	19	27
Alawite	0	2
Druze	6	8
<b>Total Muslims</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>128</b>

Table 1 Parliament of Lebanon: seat allocation (Norton, 1991)

According to Salem, these changes laid to rest “*the decade-old complaint that the state was dominated by a Maronite President to the disadvantage of other groups*”. (Salem, 1991:78) Krayem designates the Taif Agreement as a pact that “*resulted in a reproduction of the Lebanese confessional state under a new formula. Sectarian balance and sectarian participation replaced one-sect hegemony, thus power became distributed centrally.*” (Krayem, 1997) All religious communities could thus claim political representation with the Taif Agreement on the expense of the Christian Maronites. The reforms of the political system that the Taif Agreement entailed represent the necessary conditions for the reconstitution of a national consensus, a national identity and a political framework with which members of all groups and communities can identify.

The post-war government was anxious to extend its authority to all areas of the country as a consequence to the Taif Agreement demanding that all militias should hand over their arms to the Lebanese Army. However, Hezbollah, who had been the key player in combating Israel’s Lebanese proxies

in south Lebanon during the civil war, was allowed to keep its arms. Hezbollah had allied itself with Syria during the last years of the civil war and was exempted from the general disarmament negotiated in the Taif Agreement, the main cause being thanks to the Syrian regime's persistence on labeling the party as a resistance movement against the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory in the south. (Khashan, 2012) At this point, Syrian influence on Lebanon was enormous as the Taif Agreement stated that Lebanon should have "*special relations*" with Syria: relations that should be manifested in a number of agreements and treaties covering security, defense, foreign policy and economic matters. (Salem, 1991:81) Hezbollah had thereby gained an important ally, and became an eminent military and political force in Lebanon. (Haddad, 2006:24)

The end of the civil war in 1990 led to the transformation of the party from being a militia, primarily fighting the Israeli presence in south Lebanon, to a mainstream political party that also had a resistance wing. Hezbollah also took advantage of the weakness of the newly formed Lebanese government and manifested its presence in Shia dominated areas, mainly because of the Lebanese government's "*shy presence in Shi'i-concentrated areas*" and therefore established schools, clinics and hospitals, and upheld social welfare facilities across most of the country, including cash subsidies to families living under the poverty line. (Haddad, 2006:24-25) Early claims that Hezbollah is Lebanon's "*largest non-state provider of healthcare and social services*", and operates a large network of "*high quality*" schools that even attracts non-Muslim children. (Early, 2006:1)

The situation in Lebanon after the end of the civil war was thus characterized by mainly a marginalization of the Shiite population that had occurred before and during the years of the war, which Hezbollah used in order to gain a foothold within the Lebanese (Shiite) public sphere and also by a weakening of all actors involved in the war, with increased Syrian presence in the country.

On many parameters, Hezbollah's social services serve as an alternative to the services provided by the Lebanese state. The organization thus resembles a mini state within the greater Lebanese state, which is why the following part will look more into how Joel Migdal's "State-in-Society" theory can be applied on Hezbollah, and how the Taif Agreement created a window of opportunity for Hezbollah to increase its influence both nationally and internationally.

#### Hezbollah: The origin

Established in 1982, Hezbollah emerged as a coherent organization during 1985, while the civil war was still going on. Inspired by the revolution in Iran, Hezbollah embraced calls for an "Islamic Republic" in Lebanon. With the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the continued occupation of several areas in the south by both Israeli and Israel-friendly proxies, the organization managed to mobilize and recruit large numbers of mainly Shia supporters, who were primarily driven by religious motives. (Early, 2006, Haddad, 2006) Early indicates that the desire of the newly formed Iranian regime was to export its Islamic Revolution to countries across the Middle East and that the leadership of Hezbollah, which composed mostly of Shia clerics who had connections to Iran, wanted to lead the way for such a movement in Lebanon. (Early, 2006). According to Early, the main premise that defines and unites Hezbollah is the fight against Israel. Israel is typically portrait as being the "ultimate oppressor" that needs to be resisted. (Early, 2006) Iran provides the ideological and structural platform for the organization to follow, while Israel provides the necessary justification for the continued existence of the organization post-Taif, as Israel still occupies areas in south Lebanon. (Early, 2006)

In recent years, Hezbollah abolished the idea of creating an Islamic Republic in Lebanon, and is now seeking cooperation with fellow Lebanese parties and trying to represent itself as a political party that aims at continuing its social welfare services. According to Haddad, this can be seen as a form of 'Lebanonization' of the party, where the organization is expected to "*lay down its arms (...) and continue to exist as a social and political party*" just like other

Lebanese militias did (Haddad, 2006). However, recent events, and especially the conflict in Syria, have shown that the group might not yet be ready to hand over its arms to the Lebanese state, as the group seems more involved in conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Bahrain and Yemen, and is continuing to improve its arsenal of weaponry in Lebanon (Levitt, 2013).

Early explains the transition in Hezbollah's view on the Lebanese society in the 90's as being caused by two things: pressure from Syria on the organization and the establishment of a 'more moderate regime' in Iran after the death of Khomeini. (Early, 2006). According to Early, Hezbollah agreed to put behind its ambitions for an Islamic Republic in Lebanon in exchange of a legitimatization of its activities against Israel. Hezbollah's decision can be seen as taken out of a pragmatic stance, as the larger segment of the Lebanese society is not Islamic and creating an Islamic Republic will therefore face different challenges. (Early, 2006, Harik, 2004) Harik justifies this move from the government's side as being a calculated move (in collaboration with Syria) aiming at narrowing Hezbollah's position within society and hoping that it would give up its state-like autonomy in exchange for political representation within the legitimate Lebanese government. (Harik, 2004). However, Early argues that Hezbollah saw it as an opportunity to influence the behavior of the government from within and validate its own authority by being a part of the recognized establishment. This transition shifted Hezbollah "*from the periphery of the Lebanese society to its very core*". (Early, 2006)

#### Rise of popular support and relationship to the Lebanese state

During the civil war, the lack of a central government resulted in the growth of confessional parties, as demonstrated above. These parties became the primarily "intermediaries between state and citizens" as the government was unable to provide basic services for the population. (Early, 2006) Like other Lebanese actors, Hezbollah created efficient institutions including hospitals, clinics and construction companies that all served to increasing the popular support for the organization, especially in Beirut's southern suburbs and in the

south. (Haddad, 2006, Norton, 2007) Haddad argues that Hezbollah does not only enjoy support from the lower class, as the case is with other religious movements, but also enjoys great support among well-educated Lebanese, mostly Shia Muslims, who to some extent prefers the organization rather than the state. (Haddad, 2007)

Among scholars (Harik, Hazbun and others), Lebanon is usually depicted as being a 'weak state' that lacks territorial sovereignty and is weakened by a sectarian political system that encourages conflict rather than thwarting it. According to Hazbun, these conditions are seen as being the main reasons behind the proliferation of violent non-state actors within a country, Hezbollah being one of them. These actors generate political instability and insecurity that affects both the country they are in and neighboring countries. Hazbun argues that Lebanon for instance is considered "*a geopolitical battleground for foreign powers and their non-state or sub-state proxies*". (Hazbun, 2016) Hezbollah can be seen as being a non-state proxy as it has strong bonds to Iran. Most Hezbollah leaders were all students of the same seminary school in Najaf, Iraq, as where the late Khomeini had studied at, as Harik pinpoints. She characterizes the cooperation between Iran and Hezbollah as being "*unprecedented*" and "*a new phenomenon in the Middle East*". (Harik, 2004:16) However, she raises questions regarding the establishment of Hezbollah, as being directed from Tehran, as a result of Shia clerical meetings in Lebanon, or as being triggered by the social unjust that the Shia population underwent during the civil war. Harik tries to answer her own question by mentioning the strong confessional bonds that the Lebanese society has, and she highlights government corruption and the marginalization of the Shia population after the National Pact divided power between the Sunni and Maronite populations, as being primary causes behind the emergence of Hezbollah. (Harik, 2004:21) Early backs her up, as the Lebanese regime can mainly be characterized by two things: The confessional/sectarian political system, and the relationship to Syria after the Taif Agreement. The

confessional system quickly became outdated and unreflective to the demographic figures in the country, and thereby reinforced sectarian divisions and political disagreements. (Early, 2006) Early argues that Hezbollah should be studied within this framework, as the party can be seen as representing the *“factional interests of the Shiite community”* (Early, 2006:116). The Taif Agreement and the increased Syrian role in the Lebanese internal affairs that the agreement ensures can thus be seen as some kind of window of opportunity that Hezbollah can take advantage of, in order to increase its influence. Influence of external factors will be elaborated later on.

Characterizing Lebanon as a strong or weak state depends, according to Migdal, on the level of social control that the state exercises on its population, and thereby on the amount of capabilities, it has. The more social control, the more capabilities the state can develop, and that way the state becomes stronger. (Migdal, 1988:22, 32). State control in this essence means that the population prefers the state and are more inclined to interact and abide by its decisions, than to the behavior and decisions of other non-state institutions. Compliance is Migdal’s first indicator of social control and it entails that the population respects and acts compliant to the state’s demands and that, in case of noncompliance, the state is able to sanction the offender of the rules (Migdal 1988: 32).

With Hezbollah’s involvement in the Syrian conflict, a clear violation of the compliance aspect listed by Migdal can be observed. After Hezbollah’s involvement in the conflict became clear in 2013, several Lebanese parties, including the then Lebanese president, agreed on a document *“The Baabda Declaration”* that emphasized on the neutrality of Lebanon in the Syrian conflict, mainly by avoiding any intervention in the conflict. The main argument was that the stability and civil order of the Lebanese state was at stake and that neutrality was the best option in order to avoid repercussion and regional tension. (Schöpfer, 2015) However, Hezbollah continued its presence in Syria, and legitimized the presence as being of a ‘self-defense’

character for the Shia community living on the border-line between Lebanon and Syria. By doing that, in Migdal's eyes, Hezbollah is challenging the state, as the party did not comply with the demands of the state. The non-compliance also shows the fragility of the Lebanese authorities as no sanctions were made on Hezbollah. The state does not have monopoly over the use of force in the state, and is not able to exert its authority on particular segments within the society. The Lebanese authorities could not demand compliance from Hezbollah, as it did not have the ability to make use of sanctions, which are fundamental in Migdal's argument. (Migdal, 1988, Schöpfer, 2015) The weakness of the Lebanese state can thus be seen in its inability to control all of its territory and its failure to contain Hezbollah, increasing the country's vulnerability (Hazbun, 2016).

In other examples, the role of Hezbollah and the inability of the Lebanese state to react to violations within its territorial borders are also clear. The state is in most cases not able to enforce the law on Hezbollah members as was the case when the Special Tribunal for Lebanon demanded that Lebanese citizens be handed over, accused of assassinating the prior Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005. The accused were all members of Hezbollah and the organization refused to hand them over to the tribunal. The Lebanese authorities could do nothing. (Bergman, 2015)

As mentioned above, the Shia population in Lebanon in particular are more inclined to prefer Hezbollah's presence in the country, and the legitimacy of its state-like decisions. Decisions that undermine the legitimacy of the Lebanese authorities, as was the case when Hezbollah launched its cross-border operations that led to the Israel-Lebanon war in 2006. According to Haddad, 80 % of polled Shiites in 2006<sup>1</sup> where "*generally approving*" of endorsing Hezbollah and its militant activities. A majority of polled participants (70%) even thought that the party should continue to grow, indicating that

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<sup>1</sup> Poll was carried out before the war in 2006.

popular support for Hezbollah, at least among the Shia population might counterbalance the state's position. (Haddad, 2006) Migdal's second component "*participation*" seems to fit here, as participation entails that other actors within a state receive a great amount of support from the population. Hezbollah's success in gaining a foot into the political institutions of the Lebanese state emphasizes this development. In the latest parliamentary elections, Hezbollah managed to get 14 members of parliament elected and has had a leading role within the March 8 Coalition that has opposed the March 14 Coalition since 2005. The party also holds a third of the cabinet seats in the current 'unity' government. (Aljazeera, 2014) Hezbollah is also able to mobilize hundreds of thousands of supporters to its demonstrations.

Early states that Hezbollah's transformation after the Taif Agreement and its decision to participate in national elections enabled it to work for the national interests of the Shiite population thus preventing (and in the case of Amal; the resurgence) of a rivaling organization that could replace its social hegemony in the south. (Early, 2006) The strong support to the organization reveals the high capacity of Hezbollah to penetrate the society and to regulate social relationships, as highlighted by Migdal, which shows a low amount of capabilities by the state and thereby exposes its fragility (Migdal 1988: 32).

#### External factors: Iran, Syria and Israel

When looking at Hezbollah's increased presence at the Lebanese scene, it is also important to look closer at regional actors and their influence on the organization, in order to examine their role. For as Early argues, it would have seemed 'unlikely' that the Lebanese state allowed the presence of an actor within its borders to remain heavily armed voluntarily. He states that Hezbollah was the most well trained and well-armed faction at the end of the civil war and that the organization had not (yet) given up on its goal of establishing an Islamic Republic in Lebanon when the Taif Agreement was signed. (Early, 2006) However, the Lebanese state did not pursue to disarm

Hezbollah as it did with all the other Lebanese militias. In fact, successive governments endorsed Hezbollah's presence in the south, and its armed opposition to the Israeli occupation there. (Dorsey, 2001)

As stated several times during this project, Iran and Syria had a vital role in both the emergence and continued existence of Hezbollah. However, the two countries had different agendas in its support to Hezbollah. While Iran saw its support to Hezbollah as a step on the way in its fight against Western hegemony in the Middle East and an opportunity to spark an Islamic Revolution in a country that had a large minority of Shiites, Syria had more of security interests. Early states that Syrian interests in supporting the existence of Hezbollah were mainly related to its security interests in south Lebanon on the border with Israel, as Israel was (and still is) occupying the Syrian Golan Heights. (Early, 2006, Harik, 2004). The Iranian support was manifested around creating a group with the necessary capacity to fight Israel, allowing increased Iranian presence in the Middle East, but also a group that could have a leading role in the expansion of Shiite Islam's influence in Lebanon, Harik argues. Iranian support was therefore crucial in the beginning and Harik states that Iran quickly became the "*largest employer in the Bekaa region*" in east Lebanon, as Hezbollah fighters received monthly salaries and other benefits from Iran. (Harik, 2004)

After the civil war and the signing of the Taif Agreement, Syria gained the upper hand in Lebanon. The agreement not only emphasized on the "*special relations*" between Lebanon and Syria, but it also stated that Syria was to assist the Lebanese government in extending its authority and legitimacy over all Lebanese territory. This also included disarming all Lebanese militias. (Harik, 2004) According to Harik, this was a clear indication of Syria's political and military ascendancy and hegemony in Lebanon. (Harik, 2004)

In the beginning, Hezbollah's increased presence on the Lebanese scene clashed with the Syrian presence, but it was quickly resolved with Iran's

acknowledgement of Syria's ascendancy within Lebanon and that "*Damascus was the ultimate authority in Lebanon and (Hezbollah's) survival and political continuity depended on Syria's approval*". (Early, 2006) The agreement between the two countries meant that Hezbollah would stop challenging the Syrian hegemony in Lebanon, which is why the Syrian regime was confident it could confine Hezbollah should their influence "*increase too much*". (Early, 2006) The continued Syrian presence in Lebanon as stated in the Taif Agreement was also connected to the continued Israeli presence in south Lebanon, and with no other force fighting the Israelis, Hezbollah thus "*filled a vacuum*" (Harik, 2004)

The Israeli presence in south Lebanon can thus be seen as being one of the primary causes behind both the emergence and the continued existence of Hezbollah after the civil war, as the presence served as an invitation for Iranian involvement in Lebanon, but also possessed a threat to Syrian interests. The Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, primarily due to Hezbollah's resistance, represented a tremendous victory for Hezbollah and gained the organization huge popular support among Lebanese and Arabs. (Early, 2006) This development in Middle Eastern politics portrayed Hezbollah as an organization that managed to do what the Lebanese government had failed to; freeing Lebanese territory from Israeli occupation. The state was thus overrun once again, according to Migdal's theory. This time on the *legitimacy* indicator as Hezbollah has a military force not even challengeable by the state. A military force that the organization has built, thanks to assistance from both Syria and Iran. (Early, 2006)

To sum up, the above shows a number of things. Firstly, that the Taif Agreement brought Muslim political representation to the same level as the Christian representation, and thereby weakened the Christian position in the Lebanese society, mainly to Sunni Muslim advantage. The agreement also put Syrian influence in the core of Lebanese domestic and international politics. Secondly, that the marginalization of the Shiite population and ideological

influence from the Iranian Republic, in addition to the Israeli presence in south Lebanon have been the key causes behind the emergence of Hezbollah during the civil war. The increased Syrian presence made possible due to the Taif Agreement and the close relationship between Iran and Syria only strengthened Hezbollah's position within Lebanon and ensured that the Lebanese government legitimized the organization's actions against the Israeli occupation. Lastly, the above also shows that the relationship between Hezbollah and the Lebanese state is complex, as Hezbollah enjoys a larger degree of social control over components of the Lebanese population. Migdal's "State-in-Society" theory shows that Hezbollah competes with the state on all three parameters: compliance, participation and legitimacy. On compliance, Hezbollah's intervention in Syria has showed that the organization is not afraid of taking steps that might undermine the authority of the Lebanese state and that the state in fact is incapable of sanctioning the organization for its actions. On participation, the large popular support that Hezbollah has due to its large network of social services, and the fact that a large segment of the Lebanese society believes that the organization has the right to fight in Syria and stay as the primary defense against any Israeli aggression, shows that Hezbollah's actions are accepted among the population. On legitimacy, Hezbollah has proved to be a much stronger actor when it comes to military power, as the organization was able to deter Israel from south Lebanon and is now able to defend the Lebanese border from insurgents coming from Syria. A task the state has not been able to do.

## Conclusion

This paper examines Hezbollah in the wake of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and looks deeper into some of the major historical events that might have led to the emergence and the continued existence of the organization, specifically the signing of the Taif Agreement in 1989. The problem formulation for the paper has been the following:

*How has the Taif Agreement created a 'window of opportunity' for Hezbollah to gain increased influence within the Lebanese state?*

In order to examine the above problem formulation, this paper first examines historical events that happened during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) that led to the emergence of Hezbollah and the signing of the Taif Agreement, the agreement that ended the deadly civil war. The examination of the historical events shows that Hezbollah was created in a context where Shiite Muslims, the main constituent of the non-state organization today, were marginalized and deprived of political, economic and social participation within the Lebanese state. The civil war, which involved many different Lebanese (and non-Lebanese) actors, was characterized by having a sectarian nature, thus fueling violence between especially Christians and Muslims, but also within the same sect. The historical overview also shows that the civil war ended with mainly all parties being weakened, while Hezbollah, the only party not involved in the conflict, was gaining support from the public. The party had primarily emerged deeply affected by the Iranian Revolution but also by the Israeli presence in south Lebanon, the stronghold of the Shiite population. The context in which Hezbollah emerged was thus characterized by having a marginalized Shiite population, Iranian influence and Israeli occupation of large areas of south Lebanon. This paper then moves over to examine the impact of the Taif Agreement on Hezbollah's position within the Lebanese society, and the degree of influence from external factors. The Taif Agreement managed to move most of the executive powers once held by the Maronite

president, to the Sunni prime minister thereby weakening especially the Maronite position in the Lebanese society. Representation in parliament was revised and the ratio of Christian members of parliament to that of Muslim members went from 6:5 to half-and-half, thus *“reproducing the Lebanese confessional state under a new formula”* as stated by Krayem. (Krayem, 1997) The Shiite political position was also enforced on the expense of the Maronite position. The Taif agreement also allowed increased Syrian influence on the political and economic situation in Lebanon. Improved relations between Syria and Iran reflected positively on Hezbollah’s position within the Lebanese society. Hezbollah was allowed to keep its arms and continue its armed resistance in the south with official approval from the government, in return of giving up its idea of establishing an Islamic republic in Lebanon, and operate under Syrian influence. Hezbollah was thus allowed to continue building its social services, earning it large popular support among the Shiite population. After the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah’s reputation rose and its continued presence on the eastern Syrian-Lebanese border has gained the organization support from other sects too. The inability of the Lebanese state to secure Lebanese territory, in addition to not being able to provide basic services to its population has led to Hezbollah filling a vacuum that only has strengthened the organization’s position within the Lebanese society, making it one of the most influential and powerful non-state actors in the Middle East. Stating whether the Taif Agreement has been the only reason to why Hezbollah has gained increased influence in the Lebanese society is not possible as there are many other factors that have affected Hezbollah. It can be concluded that the Taif Agreement has had a leading role in the increased influence that Hezbollah has acquired, as the agreement paved the way for increased Syrian influence in Lebanon. However, popular support and acceptance of Hezbollah’s actions within the Lebanese society remains one of the most important causes behind Hezbollah’s continued hegemony on the Lebanese state.

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