

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.
PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 02-05-2021	2. REPORT TYPE Master of Military Studies (MMS) thesis	3. DATES COVERED (From - To) AY 2020-2021
--	--	---

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Countering Iran Through Hezbollah	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER N/A
	5b. GRANT NUMBER N/A
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER N/A

6. AUTHOR(S) Van Hooser, Curtis J., LCDR, USN	5d. PROJECT NUMBER N/A
	5e. TASK NUMBER N/A
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER N/A

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) USMC Command and Staff College Marine Corps University 2076 South Street Quantico, VA 22134-5068	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER N/A
--	--

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) N/A
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) N/A

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release, distribution unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT
Iran exports its terrorism and increases its global influence through proxy forces. These proxy forces provide financial support to Iran, carry out attacks on Iran's behalf, spread Iran's influence, and provide access and placement for Iranian forces on the global stage. Hezbollah has emerged as Iran's premier proxy force and the most influential proxy that achieves the strategic goals for Iran. As a rogue state, Iran poses a significant threat to the United States as well as the entire international community. If the U.S. and its allies hope to degrade Iran's influence around the world, they must focus their efforts on Hezbollah. It is possible for the U.S. and its allies to dissolve the relationship between Iran and Hezbollah through diplomatic, economic, and/or military efforts.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), Qods Force, Hezbollah, Special Operations Forces (SOF), Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON	
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			USMC Command and Staff College	
Unclass	Unclass	Unclass	UU	32	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code) (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office)	

United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Countering Iran Through Hezbollah
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

AUTHOR:

LCDR Curtis J. Van Hooser, USN

AY 2020-21

MMS Mentor Team and Oral Defense Committee Member:
Lieutenant Colonel Jeremy Glauber, US Army

Approved: 

Date: 6 May 2021

MMS Mentor Team and Oral Defense Committee Member:
HARMON, Dr C

Approved: 

Date: 6 May 2021

*United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Countering Iran Through Hezbollah
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

AUTHOR:

LCDR Curtis J. Van Hooser, USN

AY 2020-21

MMS Mentor Team and Oral Defense Committee Member:

Approved: _____

Date: _____

MMS Mentor Team and Oral Defense Committee Member:

Approved: _____

Date: _____

Executive Summary

Title: Countering Iran Through Hezbollah

Author: Lieutenant Commander Curtis J. Van Hooser, United States Navy

Thesis: As a rogue state, Iran poses a significant threat to the United States as well as the entire international community. If the U.S. and its allies hope to degrade Iran's influence around the world, they must focus their efforts on Hezbollah.

Discussion: The United States and Iran have had a volatile relationship with each other for more than 30 years. Less than one year ago, these two nations were at the brink of war following the assassination of Qasem Soleimani and the Iranian ballistic missile attack on Coalition Forces in Iraq. Iran exports its terrorism and increases its global influence through proxy forces. These proxy forces provide financial support to Iran, carry out attacks on Iran's behalf, spread Iran's influence, and provide access and placement for Iranian forces on the global stage. Hezbollah has emerged as Iran's premier proxy force and the most influential proxy that achieves the strategic goals for Iran.

Conclusion: At this present time, it is possible for the U.S. and its allies to dissolve the relationship between Iran and Hezbollah through diplomatic, economic, and/or military efforts. By focusing the efforts of national power on Hezbollah, the U.S. is more likely to avoid vertical escalation and state on state kinetic conflict with Iran. The U.S. and Iran are on a path of destruction, and in order to contain this global threat, the U.S. must focus its efforts towards Hezbollah.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

QUOTATION FROM, ABSTRACTION FROM, OR REPRODUCTION OF ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS DOCUMENT IS PERMITTED PROVIDED PROPER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS MADE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	4
Historical Background	5
The Creation of Hezbollah	7
The Hezbollah Threat	9
Hezbollah Legitimacy in Lebanon	14
Opportunity to Demilitarize?	16
Dismantling Hezbollah	20
Restructure the JCPOA	25
Conclusion	26

Preface

The desire to research the foreign policy challenges with respect to Iran came from my various Middle East deployments with the U.S. military and the multiple academic seminars focused on this particular subject during my attendance at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College. I am not a foreign policy expert, but my individual research on Iran has led me to this unique perspective on an incredibly challenging topic.

I would like to personally thank Dr. Christopher Harmon and Lieutenant Colonel Glauber for their unwavering support through this entire process. Their mentorship was absolutely invaluable, and I most certainly would not have been able to do this without their unmatched expertise and guidance.

As a rogue state, Iran poses a significant threat to the United States as well as the entire international community. According to the United States National Security Strategy, Iran's influence and destabilizing activities, if left unchecked, is unacceptable for U.S. long term security policy.¹ Hezbollah, a Shia Islamist political party and terrorist organization, has emerged as Iran's most sophisticated and influential proxy force. Iran relies on this specific proxy force in order to promote its global aspirations of power and influence. If the U.S. and its allies hope to degrade Iran's influence around the world, they must focus their efforts on Hezbollah.

Historical Background

The volatile relationship between the United States and Iran can be traced back to key events that took place in the late 1970's. At this time, Iran was controlled by the autocratic leader, Mohammad Reza Shah and the Iranian populace was becoming increasingly unhappy about the economic recession and the perception that their leader was a "puppet" of the United States.² During this time of unhappiness and unrest, a prominent Shia cleric named Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, became increasingly popular and called for a revolution to overthrow the corrupt "U.S. puppet", Mohammad Reza Shah.³ This led to a successful revolution in Iran and on April 1, 1979 Mohammad Reza Shah was overthrown and Iran adopted a new constitution that established the theocratic government they called a republic.⁴

¹ Joseph R. Biden, "Interim National Security Strategic Guidance" White House Office (2021).
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>

² Defense Intelligence Agency, "Iran Military Power: Ensuring Regime Survival and Securing Regional Dominance," *U.S. Government Publishing Office (2019)*, 3,
[https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power %20Publications/Iran_Military_Power_LR.pdf](https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/Iran_Military_Power_LR.pdf)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Following the Revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini became the Supreme Leader of Iran and immediately established the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) which gave legitimacy to all the militias that helped fight the government forces during the revolution.⁵ This means that Iran currently has two different Armed Forces, the Artesh and the IRGC. The Artesh are the conventional forces tasked with defending the sovereignty of Iran from external threats.⁶ However, the IRGC have a different role. They were envisioned by the Ayatollah as the “people’s army” and serve as the protectors of the Islamic Revolution.⁷ The IRGC is under direct control of the Ayatollah, and in many ways have advantages over the Artesh due to the regime’s complete trust in them.⁸

This idea of revolution and defending the revolution against the “West” plays a fundamental role in the way Iran views itself in the international community. Iran believes their sovereignty and culture are under a constant “siege” from western foreign powers such as the United States.⁹ They view themselves as the Islamic nation that has overcome and stood up to foreign nations to preserve their sovereignty and Islamic way of life. As a result of this, “the Islamic Republic has adopted an anti-imperialist liberation ideology as a pillar of its foreign policy.”¹⁰ They see themselves as liberators of the Islamic faith from western imperialism and believe it is their duty to “free its Muslim brethren across the region from the yoke of foreign

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, 10.

⁷ Nader Uskowski, *Temperature Rising: Iran’s Revolutionary Guards and Wars in the Middle East*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2018), xiv.

⁸ Defense Intelligence Agency, “Iran Military Power: Ensuring Regime Survival and Securing Regional Dominance,” *U.S Government Publishing Office (2019)*, 5, https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/Iran_Military_Power_LR.pdf

⁹ Linda Robinson, Todd C. Helmus, Raphael S. Cohen, Alireza Nader, Andrew Radin, Madeline Magnuson, Katya Migacheva, “Modern Political Warfare Current Practices and Possible Responses,” Rand Corporation (2018), 127, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1772.html

¹⁰ Ibid.

control.”¹¹ Iran understands it could never match countries like the United States’ military or economic power, so Iran utilizes the “soft power” strategy and approach. With soft power, Iran tries to shape people’s morals and utilizes a shared culture and religion to gain their influence over a population. ¹²

In order to export influence and power throughout the globe, Iran utilizes proxy forces as part of their “soft power” strategy. “Through loyal militias, Iran intimidates political actors and manufactures political crises that it must then be called in to resolve. It has encouraged militias to establish political organizations, with Lebanese Hezbollah serving as the most successful example of this tactic.”¹³ Hezbollah is by far the most influential proxy force that Iran employs to promote its influence and power. Not only does Hezbollah promote Iran’s influence in the Middle East region, but it also supports Iranian efforts on a global scale. Hezbollah began as a small militia force loyal to the Shia authority in Iran and has grown over time into an organization with a global reach through its various illicit networks.

The Creation of Hezbollah

The proxy force, Hezbollah, was created just a few years after the 1979 Iran Revolution and was stood up to protect the Shia population in Lebanon, protect Lebanese sovereignty from Israel, and “project Iranian power.”¹⁴ In 1985, Hezbollah pursued the creation of an Islamic republic in Lebanon to counter against all “Western Imperialists” such as Israel and the United States.¹⁵ These goals directly aligned with the same principles Iran continues to promote.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid, 128.

¹³ Ibid, 129.

¹⁴ Scott Modell and David Asher, “Pushback: Countering the Iran Action Network,” *Center for a New American Security* (2013), 5, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/pushback-countering-the-iran-action-network>

¹⁵ Levitt, Matthew. *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon’s Party of God*. (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2015), 8.

Hezbollah holds an “ideological commitment” to the doctrine of “velayet-e-faqih” which gave the supreme Ayotollah the power to be the supreme head of government.¹⁶ “The group is thus committed simultaneously to the decrees of Iranian clerics, the Lebanese state, its sectarian Shia community, and fellow Shia abroad.”¹⁷ The group started out quiet and remained under the radar in order to avoid initial attention. However, Hezbollah officially announced their creation on February 16, 1985, which was the anniversary of the death of Raghieb Harb who was assassinated by Israel operatives.¹⁸ Along with the commitment to “velayet-e-faqih”, Hezbollah stated that the United States and its proxy forces like NATO and Israel are guilty of invading Muslim nations.¹⁹ While Hezbollah may have started out as a regional proxy, it has matured into a legitimate political party in Lebanon and a group that has developed a global footprint through their illicit and terrorist activity network.

Once Iran officially supported the creation of their premier proxy force, Hezbollah, they had to figure out a way to support the group both militarily and financially. The IRGC Qods Force provided the answer. The IRGC Qods Force is responsible for exporting Iran’s revolution and conducting irregular and asymmetric warfare outside of the Iranian borders.²⁰ One U.S. State Department member stated that “it’s like taking the C.I.A., Special Forces, and the State Department and rolling them into one.”²¹ Mission sets for the Qods Force include training, equipping, and advising proxy forces, conducting assassinations, organizing information operation campaigns, covert diplomacy, covert action, the passage of weapons, and acquiring

¹⁶ Ibid, 8-9.

¹⁷ Ibid, 9.

¹⁸ Daher, Aurelie. *Hezbollah: Mobilisation and Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 53.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Scott Modell and David Asher, “Pushback: Countering the Iran Action Network,” *Center for a New American Security* (2013), 9, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/pushback-countering-the-iran-action-network>

²¹ Ibid.

additional financial revenue sources for Iran.²² One of the key deterrent strategies the IRGC possesses is their cruise and ballistic missile capability. The IRGC Qods Force is responsible for moving these high performing missiles to Hezbollah which creates a significant challenge for adversaries in the region like Israel and Saudi Arabia.²³ The Qods Force provides a pivotal link from Iran to Hezbollah. With direct support from the Qods Force and Iran, Hezbollah was able to gain legitimacy and credibility in Lebanon and expand their enterprise of illegal activities and terrorism across the globe.

The Hezbollah Threat

With strong Iranian support, Hezbollah has been able to expand throughout the globe. For example, Hezbollah currently operates in countries such as Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Congo, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Venezuela, Bolivia, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Nicaragua, and various European nations.²⁴ Hezbollah no longer creates a problem just in the Middle East region; it has evolved into a global menace that looks to spread its terrorist and illegal actions on behalf of Iran. Iran utilizes Hezbollah for an array of purposes. Hezbollah fights alongside the Qods Force in Syria, assists in the movement of sophisticated weapons and ordnance, provides an additional revenue source for Iran through its criminal enterprises, conducts terrorist attacks at the direction of Iran, and provides access and placement for Iranian operatives.²⁵

²² Ibid.

²³ Uskowi, Nader, *Temperature Rising: Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Wars in the Middle East*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 13.

²⁴ Scott Modell and David Asher, "Pushback: Countering the Iran Action Network," *Center for a New American Security* (2013), 16-20, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/pushback-countering-the-iran-action-network>

²⁵ Ibid, 11-12.

With support from Iran, Hezbollah has infiltrated and befriended the criminal enterprises in West Africa. Hezbollah has established expatriate communities in Africa that specialize in international trade-based money laundering schemes, cash smuggling, and drug trafficking.²⁶ Hezbollah has taken advantage of the criminal networks in Africa in order to facilitate the flow of money through their illicit activities back to their headquarters in Lebanon and also back to Iran.²⁷ Another major laundering scheme Hezbollah has created is the importation of used cars into West African nations such as Benin and Togo.²⁸ “The cars are sold for U.S. dollars and the cash is integrated with the proceeds of cocaine being sold to European, Middle Eastern and Asian drug trafficking networks and shipped to Lebanon, where it is deposited in Hezbollah controlled banks and exchange houses.”²⁹ These illicit activities in Africa provide Hezbollah funding, the ability to clandestinely smuggle weapons and people throughout the globe, and increases their influence on the international stage. These activities support Iran by providing the “sanctioned” regime additional revenue, giving their operatives such as the Qods Force access and placement throughout the world, and providing Iran a pathway to move weapons and munitions globally to support their terrorist activities.

Hezbollah has also strategically established their presence in Latin America, “America’s backyard.” Hezbollah and Iran have historically been active in the tri border region of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil, but more recently they have established a strong relationship with the Venezuelan government.³⁰ Their operatives conduct money laundering, drug trafficking, and paramilitary training within the Venezuelan borders with complete protection by the host nation

²⁶ Ibid, 18.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Colin Clarke. “Hezbollah Is in Venezuela to Stay,” Rand Corporation (2019). <https://www.rand.org/blog/2019/02/hezbollah-is-in-venezuela-to-stay.html>

government.³¹ This relationship has opened the corridor for Iran to send its operatives and diplomats into Venezuela and increase their global influence and counter the influence of the United States in the Latin American region. Hezbollah possesses the ability to conduct a robust information operations campaign against the United States in order to cause more damage to the U.S. foreign policy goals in Latin America. For instance, the drug trafficking operations carried out by Hezbollah have also created a relationship with the Mexican drug cartels, which is a direct threat to the security of the United States.³² Once again the relationships and networks Hezbollah created supports Iran's ability to spread their influence and move weapons and operatives throughout the world.

Hezbollah is not just creating these illicit networks for financial gains. It uses these networks to carry out violent terrorist acts on behalf of Iran. These terrorist acts intimidate foreign nation governments and are directed towards the enemies of Iran. On March 17, 1992, the Israeli Embassy was attacked by a vehicle-borne suicide bomber. This terrorist attack killed 29 civilians and injured well over 200. Hezbollah claimed responsibility for this attack and stated it was in response to the assassination of the Hezbollah leader, Abbas al-Moussawi.³³ Hezbollah's Sheikh Fadlallah stated, "the enemy has said they have a long reach but when Abbas Moussawi was assassinated, the Islamic fighters proved that they can reach all the way to Argentina. The battlefield has spread throughout the world, and the battle is unfolding as time goes on."³⁴ Two years later Hezbollah conducted another suicide bombing in Argentina which

³¹ Scott Modell and David Asher, "Pushback: Countering the Iran Action Network," *Center for a New American Security* (2013), 20, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/pushback-countering-the-iran-action-network>

³² Ibid, 22. (Mexican cartels in 2021 have gained unprecedented power due to the immigration crisis at the U.S. southern border)

³³ Levitt, Matthew. *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God*. (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2015), 101.

³⁴ Ibid, 102.

killed more than 80 civilians. The target this time was the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association building. With backing from Iran, Hezbollah was attacking not only its enemy, Israel, but also the relationship between Israel and Argentina. These terrorist acts tried to intimidate the Argentinian people and government to discourage their relationship with Israel. The acts were supported by Iran, and it was documented that Iranian operatives were pivotal in the intelligence and planning for these terrorist acts.³⁵ In order to provide access and placement for these terrorist operatives, Hezbollah was able to establish fake travel agencies, such as Piloto Toursimo, which would create false documents, fake passports, and fake residency documents in order to smuggle covert operatives into the country.³⁶ Through its global network of illicit activities, Hezbollah provides Iranian supported terrorists access, placement, and material support to carry out terrorist acts.

Hezbollah has also conducted terrorist attacks on the global stage more recently. On July 18, 2012, Hezbollah was responsible for conducting a terrorist attack that involved blowing up a tourist bus in Bulgaria.³⁷ This area in Bulgaria became a popular tourist destination for Israeli citizens and the attack resulted in five Israeli civilians killed and more than 30 wounded.³⁸ This attack came just days before another Hezbollah operative was apprehended in Cyprus on suspicion of conducting a similar terrorist attack.³⁹ In 2018, German authorities arrested an Iranian diplomat who recruited an Iranian couple in Belgium to carry out a terrorist bomb attack on the National Council of Resistance of Iran rally in Paris.⁴⁰ Over 4,000 participants were

³⁵ Ibid, 88.

³⁶ Ibid, 80.

³⁷ Ibid, 354.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid, 355.

⁴⁰ Levitt, Mathew. "Iran's Deadly Diplomats" *CTC Sentinel* vol 11 issue 7 (August 2018).
<https://ctc.usma.edu/irans-deadly-diplomats/>

expected to be present during this particular rally, including Americans, Rudy Giuliani and Newt Gingrich.⁴¹ The Iranian diplomat, Assadollah Assadi, was suspected to work for the IRGC who regularly worked with Hezbollah operatives, such as in the previous Argentina terrorist attack.⁴² These are just a few examples of how both Iran and Hezbollah still present a security threat to the entire international community, and therefore must be given the proper attention from all nations.

The United States relied heavily on Israel to counter Hezbollah during the early years of its creation, but there was never a definitive strategy designed to defeat the terrorist organization.⁴³ In 1982, the United States sent its armed forces into Lebanon to help end the conflict between Israel and Lebanon. The following year the U.S. Embassy was bombed killing 63 civilians, and the barracks of the U.S. Marine Corps peacekeepers was attacked by a suicide bomber in which 241 U.S. Servicemen lost their lives. After these atrocious attacks, the US government, under the Reagan administration, described their counterterrorism strategy as an “active defense” in which terrorist acts would be intervened and stopped before they occurred.⁴⁴ However, during this time period, the United States never developed a clear strategy to dismantle terrorist organizations like Hezbollah. It was not until 1997, when Hezbollah was designated as a foreign terrorist organization under the Anti-Terrorism Act.⁴⁵ This delay in significant action by the United States enabled an Iranian supported Hezbollah to grow its power and influence globally. The September 11th attack on the United States highlighted the threat of Islamic

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Brown, Nathan. “U.S. Counterterrorism Policy and Hezbollah’s Resiliency” *Georgetown Security Studies Review* (2013). <https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2013/12/10/u-s-counterterrorism-policy-and-hezbollahs-resiliency/>

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

terrorism to the United States. However, most of these counter terrorist efforts were focused solely on Al Qaeda, allowing Hezbollah to continue its terrorist activities throughout the globe.⁴⁶ The United States has never developed a cohesive and definitive plan to defeat Hezbollah and it is time the United States recognizes the necessity to do this.

Hezbollah Legitimacy in Lebanon

Due to the lack of a comprehensive targeting strategy towards Hezbollah, this organization has been able to gain political legitimacy and credibility inside the nation of Lebanon. In 2018, Lebanon held its first legislative election in almost in ten years. The outcome resulted in the “March 8 bloc” receiving the majority of the legislative seats in the Lebanese government.⁴⁷ The “March 8 bloc” is a Hezbollah-led political organization and this was the first time in Lebanese history that Hezbollah received the majority of seats in the government. However, due to the fact that Hezbollah was designated as a foreign terrorist organization by several foreign nations, it was unable to take direct control of any major cabinet positions.⁴⁸ This is certainly a dilemma that Hezbollah wants to solve. They have become a legitimate political power inside of Lebanon and yet they still have to work through and influence other organizations in order to carry out their governmental actions. In fact, Hezbollah did not gain their political legitimacy and credibility overnight. They have worked tirelessly throughout many years to gain the confidence and trust of the Lebanese population.

Hezbollah has made great political advancements through their social and welfare institutions directed towards the Shiite population of Lebanon. “Hezbollah’s most numerous, and

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Hezbollah Lebanese Organization” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hezbollah>

⁴⁸ Ibid.

most important, institutions are those dedicated to directly supporting the Resistance. This includes providing aid to the families of the combatants, the families of detainees in the prisons of Israeli occupation, and people injured in the bombardments.”⁴⁹ Groups such as the Mu’assasat al-Shahid support the families of these Hezbollah “martyrs.”⁵⁰ As of 2006, this particular organization supported more than 1,440 families of the deceased and more than 275 families of current prisoners held by Israel.⁵¹ The support for each family includes a monthly income, housing, and even medical care.⁵²

Hezbollah also created its own construction firm for urban/rural reconstruction and development called Jihad al-Bina.⁵³ This construction company provided Hezbollah the ability to build their own facilities as well as provide housing and businesses for families supporting the efforts of Hezbollah.⁵⁴ However, it also stated that this group “works on private houses with no connection to Hezbollah and belonging to people of all denominations, as well as to damaged or destroyed shopping malls, premises, and infrastructure.”⁵⁵ Jihad al-Bina expands their influence in the rural areas by supporting farmers growing crops, leasing farm equipment, installing running water, digging wells, and installing generators for electricity.⁵⁶

Additionally, Hezbollah have become a prominent influence in the Lebanese school system. They have created their own schools called the Madaris al-Mahdi which offers elementary education all the way up to the high school level.⁵⁷ There are currently fourteen of

⁴⁹ Daher, Aurelie. *Hezbollah: Mobilisation and Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019) 96.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid, 102.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 102-104.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 104.

⁵⁶ Ibid 104.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 110.

these schools spread throughout Lebanon with an enrollment with almost 20,000 students.⁵⁸ The various social welfare organizations Hezbollah created played a significant part in the credibility and popular support given from the Lebanese population. The welfare programs started small in the early years but have now developed into large influential programs that have support throughout the entire nation of Lebanon. Through these efforts, Hezbollah established itself as a major political power in Lebanon and has gained the support of a large portion of the Lebanese population. However, even with this significant popular support, Hezbollah is still designated as a foreign terrorist organization by many foreign governments. This is a significant challenge that Hezbollah needs to overcome in order to gain the proper political credibility that it desires.

Opportunity to Demilitarize?

The United States has a unique opportunity to utilize this legitimate credibility Hezbollah has gained throughout Lebanon in order to achieve their own foreign policy goals. Even the European Union only designated Hezbollah's military wing as a terrorist organization in 2013.⁵⁹ It is a lofty goal, but the United States could make the offer to Hezbollah that if they demilitarize and turn in their weapons to the Lebanese government then the United States would take this organization off the foreign terrorist organization list.⁶⁰ This would solidify Hezbollah's goal of becoming a true political party recognized by the entire international community. "The International Institute for Strategic Studies estimated in 2017 that the militia had up to ten thousand active fighters and some twenty thousand reserves, with an arsenal of small arms,

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Kali Robinson. "What is Hezbollah" *Council on Foreign Relations* (2020).
<https://www.cfr.org/background/what-hezbollah>

⁶⁰ Simon, Steven and Stevenson, Jonathan, "The Hezbollah Problem" *Democracy Journal of Ideas* (2010).
<https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/17/the-hezbollah-problem/>

tanks, drones, and various long-range rockets.”⁶¹ According to the U.S State Department, Iran supports Hezbollah’s military activities with financial and military aid worth more than \$700 million dollars annually.⁶² The United States possesses the ability to make Hezbollah the offer to turn in their weapons and end their extremist relationship with Iran. This would give Hezbollah the opportunity to build upon the legitimate organization that it has created for the Lebanese people.

One of the key factors in order to make this goal more of a reality would be the complete support of this offer from Israel.⁶³ As noted, a main reason for Hezbollah’s creation was to protect the Shiite minority and Lebanese civilians against the aggressive actions and invasions by Israel. In order to convince Israel, the United States must be able to show the actual disarmament of the Hezbollah militia. If the United States is successful in accomplishing this, and Israel is satisfied that Hezbollah no longer possesses a military threat to Israel and that they have cut their extremist relationship with Iran, then there would be no reason for Hezbollah’s military wing to even exist. Hezbollah has been successful in protecting the Shiite minority in Lebanon. This is proven by the legislative election results in which Hezbollah gained the majority. Hezbollah does not make significant gains by carrying out the revolutionary strategy and destabilizing activities that Iran promotes. If they were to cut ties with Iran, Hezbollah would no longer feel threatened by Israel and they would be able to build upon the credible political party that they worked so hard over many years to establish.

⁶¹ Robinson, Kali. “What is Hezbollah” *Council on Foreign Relations* (2020).
<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hezbollah>

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Simon, Steven and Stevenson, Jonathan, “The Hezbollah Problem” *Democracy Journal of Ideas* (2010).
<https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/17/the-hezbollah-problem/>

The United Kingdom utilized this type of offer with the Good Friday Agreement in 1997 that effectively demilitarized the Irish Republican Army (IRA).⁶⁴ The United Kingdom understood and recognized that the IRA held the popular support of the Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland, so they decided to negotiate with the Sinn Fein which was the political wing of the IRA.⁶⁵ Just like Hezbollah, the IRA had both a military and political wing inside its organization. By recognizing the legitimacy of the IRA and choosing to negotiate with the political wing of the IRA, the United Kingdom was successful in bringing a peaceful solution to this war-torn conflict. However, one of the key differences between Hezbollah and the IRA is the outside influence of a foreign nation.⁶⁶ Iran would certainly try to stop the demilitarization and disarmament of Hezbollah. Once again, this is something the United States must clearly articulate to the political wing of Hezbollah. They do not need Iran anymore. They need to take advantage of the success they have created within their own Lebanese nation. They need to focus their efforts with regard to the people of Lebanon not the global terrorist agenda that Iran promotes.

The relationship between Iran and the United States has been extremely volatile in the recent years to say the least. Just last year, these two nations were at the brink of all-out war. Subsequently, Iraq became a breeding ground for conflict between Iran and the United States. It culminated when the United States assassinated Qasem Soleimani, the Commanding General of the IRGC, and Iran retaliated with a ballistic missile attack on U.S. Armed Forces. Even with a new U.S. presidential administration in office, the United States and Iran have not been able to reconcile their differences, and in many ways the relationship has degraded even further. If the

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

United States and Iran go to war, there is no doubt that Hezbollah and their enterprise would become a target as well. Due to Hezbollah's significant involvement in the Lebanese government, war with Iran would not only damage the global Hezbollah enterprise, but it would also significantly damage the nation of Lebanon itself. It was reported that Hezbollah has an estimated 150,000 missiles hidden in civilian structures and areas throughout the country of Lebanon.⁶⁷ Iran flows a massive amount of weaponry and missiles into Lebanon, and the Lebanese civilians will be in extreme danger if these stockpiles become military targets. Due to this, it is in Lebanon's best interest that Hezbollah demilitarize and cut their terrorist ties with the rouge nation of Iran.

One could also make another argument that Hezbollah's relationship with Iran recently has become detrimental to their own aspirations and influence within Lebanon. At the direction from Iran, Hezbollah has sent an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 fighters into the Syrian conflict in order to support the Assad regime and Iranian regional policies.⁶⁸ "Carrying the water" and executing Iranian objectives in Syria is certainly degrading Hezbollah's ability to reach their goals of a more prosperous and better Lebanon. Thousands of Hezbollah fighters have been injured in Syria and up to 2,000 have been killed, including many of its senior leaders.⁶⁹ One Hezbollah fighter stated, "we are a resistance [movement], and you don't do resistance by going to war in Syria," and then went on to say, "I will gladly go to fight Israel. But I won't send my sons to die in Syria."⁷⁰ It has also been reported that due the Syrian conflict, Hezbollah has been

⁶⁷ Seth Frantzman, "Help Lebanon: Remove Hezbollah's Stranglehold — and Its Dangerous Missile Stockpiles", *The National Review* (2020). <https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/08/help-lebanon-remove-hezbollahs-stranglehold-and-its-dangerous-missile-stockpiles/>

⁶⁸ Seth Jones, "The Escalating Conflict with Hezbollah in Syria", *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (June 2018). <https://www.csis.org/analysis/escalating-conflict-hezbollah-syria>

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

“struggling to cope with former fighters with PTSD, drug addiction, or thuggish behavior incubated in Syria’s lawless environment.”⁷¹ This apparent quarrel Hezbollah is having with Iran is an opportunity the U.S. and its allies can take advantage of and utilize public diplomacy. The offer to demilitarize and end their relationship with Iran would certainly help Hezbollah become a stronger and more credible political party inside the home nation of Lebanon.

Dismantling Hezbollah

If Hezbollah chooses to reject the offer of international credibility and legitimacy, then the United States must focus their efforts to dismantle Hezbollah’s global terrorist and criminal enterprise. These dismantling efforts would certainly be a detriment to Iran’s ability to project power and influence throughout the international community. This could also bring Hezbollah back to the negotiating table with the United States and give them a chance to accept the offer of demilitarization. The first line of effort that the United States can target is Hezbollah’s drug trafficking campaign in Latin America. The U.S. must formulate a cohesive interagency strategy targeting Hezbollah’s cocaine trafficking in Central America and the tri-border area in South America.⁷² “A 2004 Naval War College study and a 2009 Rand Corporation report put Hezbollah revenues from the tri-border area alone at between \$10 million and \$20 million, or between 10 percent and 20 percent of Hezbollah’s estimated \$100 million annual operating budget as of 2004.”⁷³ It is also stated that not one single Latin American nation has listed Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.⁷⁴ The U.S. must do a better job to focus their efforts on

⁷¹ Jeffrey Feltman, “Hezbollah: Revolutionary Iran’s most successful export”, *Brookings* (January 2019). <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/hezbollah-revolutionary-irans-most-successful-export/>

⁷² Ottolenghi, Emanuele. “Hezbollah in Latin America is a Threat the US Cannot Ignore,” *The Hill* (June 2017). <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/homeland-security/337299-hezbollah-in-latin-america-is-a-security-threat-the-us#:~:text=Hezbollah%20in%20Latin%20America%20is%20a%20threat%20the,or%20TBA%2C%20where%20Argentina%2C%20Brazil%2C%20and%20Paraguay%20converge.>

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid

dismantling this criminal enterprise that Hezbollah has established in this region. The U.S. must empower organizations like the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) to lead the efforts within a coordinated Task Force focused solely on dismantling the criminal organizations of Hezbollah in Latin America.⁷⁵ Targeting Hezbollah in Latin America, labeling it as a criminal organization, and highlighting their illicit activities which undermine the host nation governments, will help the U.S. leverage their regional allies for support, and empower the U.S. interagency organizations to utilize their authorities to effectively target Hezbollah enterprises.⁷⁶

Hezbollah is also heavily involved with illicit and criminal activities in western Africa. These activities include cash smuggling and trade-based money laundering schemes involving the import and export of used automobiles.⁷⁷ Once again, the U.S. can dismantle these activities by targeting Hezbollah as a criminal organization and leverage the authorities under Section 311 of the U.S. Patriot Act.⁷⁸ “Once an institution is identified to be a primary money laundering concern, Section 311 gives the Secretary of Treasury a range of options, including prohibiting correspondence relations, imposing additional reporting burdens, and other such steps that, overall, can drive a bank’s operations aground. Besides, a 311 designation has dire reputational consequences for a bank, as the 2011 Canadian-Lebanese Bank case proved.”⁷⁹ It has been stated that the U.S. Department of Treasury is not properly organized to be successful in this type of financial targeting efforts alongside its interagency partners.⁸⁰ In order to be successful for these

⁷⁵ Scott Modell and David Asher, “Pushback: Countering the Iran Action Network,” *Center for a New American Security* (2013), 25, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/pushback-countering-the-iran-action-network>

⁷⁶ Ibid, 24-25.

⁷⁷ Ibid,

⁷⁸ Ibid, 25.

⁷⁹ Ottolenghi, Emanuele. “Hezbollah in Latin America is a Threat the US Cannot Ignore,” *The Hill* (June 2017). <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/homeland-security/337299-hezbollah-in-latin-america-is-a-security-threat-the-us#:~:text=Hezbollah%20in%20Latin%20America%20is%20a%20threat%20the,or%20TBA%2C%20where%20Argentina%2C%20Brazil%2C%20and%20Paraguay%20converge.>

⁸⁰ Scott Modell and David Asher, “Pushback: Countering the Iran Action Network,” *Center for a New American Security* (2013), 25, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/pushback-countering-the-iran-action-network>

types of targeting efforts, the U.S. Department of Treasury needs to create “its own operational element to play a greater role in financial operations across the government, especially by law enforcement agencies.”⁸¹ Treating Hezbollah as a criminal organization and leveraging the preexisting authorities under the U.S. Patriot Act will make it easier for the U.S. to employ a more comprehensive and focused targeting effort towards Hezbollah activities abroad.

The United States also possesses the ability to financially target the nation of Lebanon in order to degrade Hezbollah and Iranian finances. Given the previous examples of Hezbollah’s criminal activities around the world and their legitimate representation inside the government of Lebanon, the U.S. can deny both Iran and Hezbollah access to the Beirut financial system.⁸² It is reported that billions of dollars are flown through the International Airport in Beirut each year due to the illicit activities Hezbollah takes part in throughout the world.⁸³ Under the Patriot Act, Section 311, the U.S. can financially target the Beirut International Airport as well.⁸⁴ These types of actions would significantly degrade the financial security of Hezbollah and Iran.

If the U.S. dismantles Hezbollah’s criminal enterprises, then Hezbollah would certainly have difficulty with the abundant social welfare projects it provides to the Lebanese population. They have leveraged these projects to gain the trust and confidence of the Lebanese people. If the U.S. executes this course of action, it would certainly damage Hezbollah’s relationship with the citizens of Lebanon, and even the Lebanese government. The Lebanese government would most definitely try to distance themselves from Hezbollah in order to avoid further sanctions from the U.S. government. These types of actions could force Hezbollah to the negotiating table

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid, 26.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

with the U.S. and convince the organization to cut ties with their terrorist ways supporting Iranian policies. Hezbollah must realize that they no longer need to be “Iran’s puppet” and that they lose so much more than they gain with their relationship with Iran.

The United States must do a better job conducting information operations highlighting the illegal and terrorist activities of Hezbollah.⁸⁵ As previously mentioned, many nations around the world still do not even consider Hezbollah a terrorist organization. This is a direct result of an unsuccessful information operation strategy against Hezbollah by the U.S. and its allies. The U.S. must highlight the terrorist acts that Hezbollah has carried out over the recent years and the security threat that it poses on the international community. Another activity that the U.S. can highlight is the narco-trafficking that Hezbollah takes part in Latin America. How can Hezbollah state that they are the defenders of the Shiite population and are based on the Islamic religion, and yet take part in the sale of drugs which directly goes against the teachings of the Quran? The U.S. must utilize public diplomacy and psychological operations to highlight these types of activities to the international community and the Islamic population. Nations need to understand the dangers of allowing Hezbollah a safe haven within their nation’s borders.

Finally, the U.S. military has a role to play in countering the activities of Hezbollah. As previously mentioned, Hezbollah relies on their illegal activities such as narco-trafficking and importing/exporting weapons and goods throughout the world. In order to accomplish this task, Hezbollah utilizes maritime vessels to transport their cargo and operatives. This provides an opportunity for U.S. Special Operations Forces (USSOF) to target these vessels and dismantle Hezbollah’s ability to transport their cargo through the maritime domain. USSOF possesses the

⁸⁵ Ibid, 24.

unique capability to conduct Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO) in order to stop the flow of these illegal goods and capture these maritime vessels and prevent future use. During these operations, USSOF can employ visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) tactics to apprehend Hezbollah operatives, seize illegal cargo, and take control of the targeted maritime vessel. This is a core capability that USSOF has perfected and carried out numerous times throughout the world.

If U.S. policy makers would like a more clandestine course of action to target Hezbollah's maritime fleet, USSOF has a solution. This course of action would enable combat swimmer operations in which special operations divers would swim sub-surface to these vessels and plant munitions on critical positions on the vessel's hull. These munitions would destroy the vessel rendering it useless for Hezbollah. However, in order to conduct operations against Hezbollah's maritime fleet, the U.S. and its allies must focus its intelligence collection efforts on Hezbollah's global criminal enterprise. Hezbollah and Iran rely on maritime vessels to move their weapons, drugs, and operatives around the world. This is a vital vulnerability that the U.S. can target.

Conducting these types of operations are beneficial for the U.S. and its allies because they will deter and contain Iran's ability to promote their power and influence at a level below state-on-state kinetic conflict. Even though the intent behind these operations is to degrade Iran's power, the U.S. will be targeting Hezbollah due to their criminal and terrorist activities. Targeting Hezbollah with military action, instead of Iran, will decrease the probability of vertical escalation between the U.S. and Iran. If Hezbollah tries to retaliate against the U.S. or its allies with terrorist actions, this would provide an opportunity for the conduct of information operations highlighting the terrorist activities that Hezbollah still carries out. Why would a

“legitimate and credible” political party carry out terrorist activities within the international community? Dismantling Hezbollah’s maritime vessels would disrupt their ability to finance their social projects and promote their influence within Lebanon. Hezbollah needs to understand that the U.S. and its allies will target them due to their relationship with Iran. Once again, this places Hezbollah in a vulnerable position due to its continued connection with Iran.

Restructure the JCPOA

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was established in 2015 during the Obama administration in order to deter Iranian nuclear weapons aspirations. The basic principle of the JCPOA was that “Iran agreed to dismantle much of its nuclear program and open its facilities to more extensive international inspections in exchange for billions of dollars’ worth of sanctions relief.”⁸⁶ In 2018, the Trump administration deemed that Iran was not adhering to the regulations imposed by the agreement and decided to withdraw from the JCPOA with Iran. As a result of the U.S withdrawal, Iran has increased its development of nuclear centrifuges as well as its enrichment of uranium.⁸⁷ If the new Biden administration desires to reinstate the JCPOA with Iran, it must restructure the deal in order to properly deter and contain Iran’s destabilizing activities throughout the international community.

The original JCPOA was far too limited and did not address one of the most vital aspects of Iran’s destabilizing and rouge activities. This aspect is Iran’s financial and military aid to its proxy forces that carry out attacks and activities on its behalf. One can argue that the most prominent and influential proxy force that Iran supports is Hezbollah. In order to execute Iranian

⁸⁶ Kali Robinson, “What Is the Iran Nuclear Deal?” *Council on Foreign Relations* (January 2021). <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-iran-nuclear-deal>

⁸⁷ Ibid.

policies and activities throughout the world, Hezbollah relies on Iranian financial support. The sanctions that the Trump administration imposed on Iran when they withdrew from the JCPOA caused significant damage to Iran's financial revenue. It is estimated that Iran lost at least \$10 billion dollars during this policy carried out by the Trump administration.⁸⁸ Furthermore, many Hezbollah officials stated that these sanctions resulted in a significant cut in financial support from Iran. For example, the sanctions made it difficult for Iran to pay Hezbollah fighters in Syria, and Hezbollah had to cancel their television station, "Al-Manar," which significantly degraded Hezbollah's ability to spread their influence and propaganda within Lebanon.⁸⁹ Before sanctions occurred, it was assessed that Iran would give up to \$700 million to Hezbollah annually.⁹⁰ Hezbollah depends on this Iranian financial support to carry out Iranian policies. If the U.S. can successfully prohibit Iran from funding proxy forces like Hezbollah, this would significantly damage the vital relationship between Iran and Hezbollah. Hezbollah would be unable to conduct its Iranian activities outside of Lebanon and it would strain the relationship with Iran. Hezbollah may realize that they can no longer be Iran's apparatus to promote their global influence and activities. In order to be successful as a legitimate and credible political party in Lebanon, they must focus their efforts and financial revenue towards the Lebanese government and society.

Conclusion

In order to deter and contain Iranian influence and destabilizing activities, the U.S. and its allies should focus more of its efforts towards Hezbollah. Hezbollah is Iran's most sophisticated

⁸⁸ Liz Sly, "Trump's Sanctions on Iran are Hitting Hezbollah, and it Hurts", *The Washington Post* (May 2019). https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/trumps-sanctions-on-iran-are-hitting-hezbollah-hard/2019/05/18/970bc656-5d48-11e9-98d4-844088d135f2_story.html

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

and influential proxy force and has access and placement throughout the entire world. Iran relies on this specific proxy force to promote its global aspirations of power and influence. Hezbollah fights alongside the IRGC Qods Force in Syria, assists in the transport of sophisticated weapons and ordnance, provides an additional revenue source for Iran through its criminal enterprises, conducts terrorist attacks at the direction of Iran, and provides access and placement for Iranian operatives throughout the globe. The ability to transport weapons and provide access and placement will become a significant security risk for the entire world if Iran is successful in acquiring nuclear weapons. Hezbollah's established global networks would provide Iran the ability to extend their nuclear weapons reach and intimidate nations throughout the world. Focusing efforts on Hezbollah will certainly affect Iranian influence and activities and provide additional security and stability throughout the international community.

At this present time, it is possible for the U.S. and its allies to dissolve the relationship between Iran and Hezbollah through diplomatic, economic, and/or military efforts. By focusing the efforts of national power on Hezbollah, the U.S. is more likely to avoid vertical escalation and state on state kinetic conflict with Iran. Once Hezbollah realizes that it will be targeted and dismantled by the U.S. and its allies, they may try to separate themselves from Iran and their terrorist activities. If Hezbollah chooses to retaliate against these nations, then it will just provide an opportunity for the U.S. to highlight their militant activities to the international community. This will significantly affect their perception throughout the international community as a legitimate and credible political party inside the nation of Lebanon. Through their significant social welfare programs and significant government representation, Hezbollah has established itself as a major political power in Lebanon and has gained the support from a large portion of the Lebanese population. Hezbollah needs to realize these achievements can all be erased due to

their continued relationship with Iran. Hezbollah would certainly benefit if its leaders ended its connection with Iran and established agreements with other nations that operate within the norms of the international community. Hezbollah is at a crossroads with their relationship with Iran and the U.S. has the opportunity to eliminate one of Iran's strongest instruments of national power. The U.S. and Iran are on a path of destruction, and in order to contain this global threat, the U.S. must focus its efforts towards Hezbollah.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brown, Nathan. "U.S. Counterterrorism Policy and Hezbollah's Resiliency" *Georgetown Security Studies Review* (2013) <https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2013/12/10/u-s-counterterrorism-policy-and-hezbollahs-resiliency/>
- Biden, Joseph R. "Interim National Security Strategic Guidance" White House Office (2021) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>
- Clarke, Colin. "Hezbollah Is in Venezuela to Stay," Rand Corporation (2019) <https://www.rand.org/blog/2019/02/hezbollah-is-in-venezuela-to-stay.html>
- Crist, David. *The Twilight Wars*. New York: Penguin Group, 2012.
- Daher, Aurelie. *Hezbollah: Mobilisation and Power*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Defense Intelligence Agency. "Iran Military Power: Ensuring Regime Survival and Securing Regional Dominance," *U.S. Government Publishing Office* (2019), https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/Iran_Military_Power_LR.pdf
- Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. s.v. "Hezbollah Lebanese Organization" <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hezbollah>
- Frantzman, Seth. "Help Lebanon: Remove Hezbollah's Stranglehold — and Its Dangerous Missile Stockpiles". *The National Review* (2020) <https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/08/help-lebanon-remove-hezbollahs-stranglehold-and-its-dangerous-missile-stockpiles/>
- Feltman, Jeffrey, "Hezbollah: Revolutionary Iran's most successful export", *Brookings* (January 2019) <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/hezbollah-revolutionary-irans-most-successful-export/>
- Jones, Seth. "The Escalating Conflict with Hezbollah in Syria", *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (June 2018) <https://www.csis.org/analysis/escalating-conflict-hezbollah-syria>
- Department of Defense. *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*. Washington, DC, 2018
- Levitt, Matthew. *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2015.
- Levitt, Matthew. "Iran's Deadly Diplomats" *CTC Sentinel vol 11 issue 7* (August 2018), <https://ctc.usma.edu/irans-deadly-diplomats/>

- Modell, Scott and Asher, David. "Pushback: Countering the Iran Action Network," Center for a New American Security (2013), <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/pushback-countering-the-iran-action-network>
- Noe, Nicholas, ed. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books, 2007.
- Ostovar, Afshon. *Vanguard of the Imam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Ottolenghi, Emanuele. "Hezbollah in Latin America is a Threat the US Cannot Ignore," *The Hill* (June 2017) <https://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/homeland-security/337299-hezbollah-in-latin-america-is-a-security-threat-the-us#:~:text=Hezbollah%20in%20Latin%20America%20is%20a%20threat%20the,or%20TBA%2C%20where%20Argentina%2C%20Brazil%2C%20and%20Paraguay%20converge>
- Robinson, Linda, Helmus, Todd, Cohen, Raphael, Nader, Alireza, Radin, Andrew, Magnuson, Madeline, Migacheva, Katya. "Modern Political Warfare Current Practices and Possible Responses," Rand Corporation (2018), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1772.html
- Robinson, Kali. "What is Hezbollah" *Council on Foreign Relations* (2020) <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hezbollah>
- Robinson, Kali. "What Is the Iran Nuclear Deal?" *Council on Foreign Relations* (January 2021) <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-iran-nuclear-deal>
- Silinski, Mark. "Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps: Its Foreign Policy and Foreign Legion". *Expeditions with MCUP* (2019), <https://www.usmcu.edu/Outreach/Marine-Corps-University-Press/Expeditions-with-MCUP-digital-journal/Irans-Islamic-Revolutionary-Guard-Corps/>
- Simon, Steven and Stevenson, Jonathan. "The Hezbollah Problem" *Democracy Journal of Ideas* (2010) <https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/17/the-hezbollah-problem/>
- Sly, Liz. "Trump's Sanctions on Iran are Hitting Hezbollah, and it Hurts", *The Washington Post* (May 2019) https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/trumps-sanctions-on-iran-are-hitting-hezbollah-hard/2019/05/18/970bc656-5d48-11e9-98d4-844088d135f2_story.html
- The White House. "A Look at the U.S. Strategy for Iran," February 13, 2019. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/look-u-s-strategy-iran/>.
- Uskowi, Nader. *Temperature Rising: Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Wars in the Middle East*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2018.

United States Department of State. "Countering Iran's Global Terrorism." November 13, 2018. <https://www.state.gov/countering-irans-global-terrorism/>