



Research Article

Conflict and Continuity: The Future of Hezbollah in the Wake of Israeli Military Strikes on Lebanon

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how Hezbollah can survive in the future, with the assumption of new Israeli military attacks on Lebanon, and how these events will influence the strategies, politics and ideologies of the Hezbollah. The study takes a qualitative approach, where the case studies and document analysis are seen to assess how Hezbollah has reacted to recent heightening, its changing role in Lebanon and the overall regional dynamics that involve the Iran, Syria and Israel. The paper is based on the realism and the constructivism and suggests that Hezbollah is at a crossroads: whether to remain a resistance movement and stay firmly rooted in politics. It has been indicated that key findings are that military confrontation helps to strengthen its legitimacy of resistance but domestic pressures and international scrutiny jeopardize its long-term survival. The study brings out weaknesses of the current Israeli deterrence policies and weaknesses of the Lebanese state machinery. The paper highlights the necessity to reset the regional policy, which would consider the origins of the influence of Hezbollah and wider geopolitical tension that leads to conflict.



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Introduction

The Hezbollah was formed in the early 1980s during the civil war and Israeli occupation of Lebanon as a Shiite Islamist resistance group with Iranian and Syrian support. With the course of time, it evolved into a strong hybrid body which is a mix of military force and political party, fully integrated into the Lebanese sectarian politics and regional politics of power (Norton, 2007). Hezbollah has since become a major force in domestic politics and regional wars and stands as the hub of the axis of resistance against Israel and the Western influence. The latest news with the renewal of Israeli airstrikes on the strongholds of Hezbollah in the southern Lebanon and Bekaa Valley have rekindled the fears of an outright war. These attacks, which were explained by Israel as preemptive security, succeed increased tensions in the region in connection with other conflicts in Gaza and Syria (Jones, 2023).

The current research explores the way the recent operations of the Israeli troops could remake the future of Hezbollah. In particular, it finds answers to two questions: What are the strategic implications of these strikes to Hezbollah? And what are the ways in which Hezbollah can counter this by changing politically, militarily, and ideologically?

The study has importance in the study of changing geopolitics of the Middle East, especially the reaction of non-state actors to the conventional military threats. It adds to the academic discussions on security studies and international relations by examining how resistance movements are transformed under the influence of the external pressure (Berti, 2016).

Literature Review

The dual nature of Hezbollah as a political party and a military militia has been the subject of a lot of scholarly work. Norton (2007) gives a detailed discussion on how Hezbollah changed its structure and converted into a political party by providing social services and representation in the Parliament in Lebanon. On the same note, Harb and Leenders (2005) look at how Hezbollah moves around the Lebanese political framework and still has an independent military arm and this duality is posited to make its legitimacy stronger both nationally and internationally. According to Azani (2009), the process of Hezbollah integrating into the world of politics has not reduced its militant abilities but institutionalized its presence in Lebanon. These works emphasize the fact that Hezbollah manages to practice both normal politics and asymmetric warfare at the same time, a phenomenon that makes it difficult to have conventional conceptions of the boundaries between the state and the non-state actors.

A large part of the literature is devoted to the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War, which is popularly regarded as a rebirth of strategic computation on the part of both parties. Investigating military performance of Hezbollah in the war, Biddle and Friedman (2008) state that the guerilla warfare featured as a hybrid model, which entailed a combination of guerilla strategies and conventional defense. Matthews (2008) goes further to discuss the organizational and the technological sophistication which Hezbollah has portrayed such as using anti-tank missiles and decentralized command networks. Other researchers include but are not limited to Ranstorp (2010) who discuss wider geopolitical implications of the conflict and its effects on Israeli

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deterrence policy and power relations in the region. The war of 2006 is one of the cases most often mentioned when it comes to developing trends in the way war is fought by non-state actors.

The emergence of non-state actors such as Hezbollah has raised a lot of interest in the subject of asymmetric warfare. The theory presented by Arreguin-Toft (2005) can be considered a prerequisite because it claims that weaker actors are frequently victorious when they employ the opposite of the strategies of their stronger counterparts. Hoffman (2007) builds upon this fact by adding the notion of hybrid threats, in which organizations such as Hezbollah integrate conventional, irregular, and cyber capabilities to take advantage of the vulnerability of state armies. Similarly, Kilcullen (2009) also stresses the strategic flexibility of insurgents, noting the fact that Hezbollah uses media and community activity as the force multipliers. These works highlight how Hezbollah can illustrate the transformation of a state-centered model of conflict to multi-dimensional and irregular warfare models.

The ideology of resistance that Hezbollah is based on is built upon an anti-imperialist and national liberation discourse that is more extensive. Saad-Ghorayeb (2002) evaluates the ideological structure of the group that presents Israel and the United States as existentialists. Based on the deterrence theory approach, researchers such as Wilner (2011) argue that Hezbollah is working under a logic of strategic deterrence whereby its rocket capabilities as well as its open demonstration of its willingness to retaliate serve as instruments to tame the aggression of Israel. Scholars like Salam (2011) criticize the independent military action of Hezbollah to weaken the Lebanese state and others view it as a way of providing security to an already weak state institution (Picard, 2012). This theoretical contradiction indicates the paradox of Hezbollah being a third party to reinforce and criticize the power of the state.

Although it has been thoroughly analyzed historically and theoretically, there is a relative lack of literature, which predicts the future of Hezbollah with increasing regional tensions, especially since October 2023, when Israel further increased its operations in the southern Lebanon. The majority of the available literature is retrospective or concentrates on the single events like the 2006 war. There are very limited literature that carry out scenario-building or predictive analysis on how Hezbollah might strategically adapt in response to the changing Israeli military doctrines, Iranian policy changes, or internal havoc in Lebanon. Besides, the interaction between the ideological and pragmatic political calculations of Hezbollah in a sensitive security setting has also not been examined thoroughly. This is an especially concerning gap in the face of the fast transforming geopolitical situation, such as the normalization of the Arab states and Israel and the changes in U.S. policy on the Middle East.

Theoretical Framework

The structural form of realism is a basic point of departure in the study of the unceasing hostile relations between Israel and Hezbollah. According to the realist thought, an anarchic international politics is characterised by the state, or more precisely, by states, which are concerned primarily with survival, with accumulating power, and with national interest (Waltz, 1979). Although Hezbollah is a non-state entity, it has more strategic calculation of a state, particularly in its deterrent position against Israel. According to other scholars such as Byman, Hezbollah possession of precision-guided missiles and strongholds in the south is the rationality of deterrence to counter the conventional power of Israel that is superior. Moreover, the fact that Hezbollah took a side with Iran and Syria can be considered through the realist idea of balancing whereby weaker states enter into alliances to oppose regional hegemons

(Mearsheimer, 2001). Disproportional retaliation as a military policy also applies to Israel trying to rebuild deterrence and project the power in an unstable regional environment as explained by realism. This model highlights the material capacity, strategic competition, and balance of power, which influence the Hezbollah-Israel conflict.

Constructivism introduces an aspect of critique to the analysis of the activities of Hezbollah by prefiguring the role of ideational factors including identity, discourse and legitimacy. Constructivism investigates the socially constructed nature of the interests in actors unlike realism that delves into material power (Wendt, 1999). The identity and public legitimacy of Hezbollah as the Shiite group in Lebanon and in the Arab-Islamic world is based on its self-proclaimed mission of the so-called resistance against the Israeli occupation and the Western imperialism (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002). Its ideological adherence to resistance is not a strategically based ideological commitment but an existential commitment based on a history of historical victimhood and religious need. In addition, the political rhetoric of Hezbollah also makes the military actions to appear both morally legitimate and defensive and supports its legitimacy despite the allegations of terrorism. The use of media, martyrdom, and religious imagery by the group creates strong narrative that creates support and aids in justifying the dual identity of the group that is both political and military (Roul, 2009). Constructivism therefore assists in understanding the reasons behind the continued fight by Hezbollah against Israel even with the heavy material and human consequences.

The post-Cold War development of security studies is one of the avenues that can prove helpful in the analysis of the military strategies of Hezbollah and countermeasures taken by Israel. The older security frameworks that were based on the state against state warfare have long since been displaced by studies on asymmetric and hybrid threats (Smith, 2005). In this regard, Hezbollah is a perfect example of this transition as it combines the traditional war methods with guerrilla warfare, cyber threats and strategic communications, which are typical of hybrid warfare (Hoffman, 2007). It is able to compete on the same level with a technologically advanced opponent such as Israel due to its decentralized military structure, tunnel networks and precision guided weapons systems. According to the scholars, such as Kaldor (2012), actors such as Hezbollah are indicative of the new wars wherein the distinctions between the state and non-state actors, combatants and civilians are not clearly defined. In Israeli terms, Hezbollah has been viewed as a terrorist threat and a quasi military capability that has made the traditional security doctrine a problem. The potential consequences of the entrenchment of Hezbollah in the civilian population is also a security subject matter that creates legal and ethical complications of warfare of modernity (Cronin, 2015). This system is useful to theorize about Hezbollah not as a rebels group but as an immensely versatile player in an evolving global security environment.

Methodology

This study takes a qualitative research to examine strategic implication of recent Israeli military attacks on Hezbollah and how the group has adjusted to them. Qualitative research especially fits well in investigating complicated political phenomena, where the qualitative context, meaning, and depth are given importance over quantification (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). It is hoped that the behavior of Hezbollah can be comprehended using the perspectives of strategic discourse, identity construction, and deterrence narratives as opposed to statistical generalization. This methodology enables an insightful and in-depth explanation of the changing conflict and the reactions of the Hezbollah, through texts, statements, and events.

The method allows developing theories by drawing patterns, themes, and causal conclusions based on empirical evidence and theoretical models.

Data Sources

News Reports, Speeches, Policy Statements, Secondary Literature, Expert Commentary. This research utilizes a variety of data points to provide triangulation and increase the credibility of the research. Firstly, a media coverage of the timely and various representations of the post-2023 Israeli airstrikes and the published activities of Hezbollah is available in news reports published by reputable regional and international sources (e.g., Al Jazeera, Reuters and The Jerusalem Post, as well as Al-Akhbar). Second, speeches and statements of prominent Hezbollah figures, in particular, of Hassan Nasrallah, can be used as the main texts to determine the strategy intent and ideological framing. Third, policy statements and military communiques by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and government of Lebanon are reviewed to gain insights on official positioning. As well, the study uses secondary scholarly sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, policy briefs, and think-tank reports, to put the conflict into context and evaluate the implications on a larger scale regionally. Lastly, the interpretational layer and real-time evaluations of the analysis are expert commentary by security analysts and Middle East scholars, who provide an interpretative contribution to the analysis.

Case Study Methodology: Concentrate on Israeli Strikes after 2023 and Hezbollah reaction.

This study uses a case study approach, and a narrow study of Israeli military operations against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon in October 2023 and beyond. The case study approach allows us to focus on the political-military relationship between Israel and Hezbollah in a crucial time of escalation and have a very limited context to study causality and actor behavior (Yin, 2018). The paper uses process tracing to evaluate a series of actions, including the beginning of Israeli air campaigns, the Hezbollah efforts to retaliate or deter, and the storytelling tactics of both sides. The new tactical approaches of Hezbollah, which are changes in rocket placements, the drone application, the information warfare, and political rhetoric are given special consideration. The case study also takes interest in similar developments in the Gaza front and the posture of Iran in the region to contextualize the decisions of the Hezbollah in a larger geopolitical context.

Limitations: Access to Sources, Evolving Nature of the Conflict

This research is limited in a number of ways. First, the availability of primary sources that are reliable and verifiable like in conflict regions like in southern Lebanon is limited in itself through security threats, media bans and propaganda. This can lead to the dependence on the secondary account that might be biased or partial. Second, the dynamic environment of the Hezbollah-Israel conflict implies that real time developments may change strategic environment dramatically throughout the research. This creates time constraints when making firm conclusions on long-term trends or results. Besides, that the inner Hezbollah decision-making and military infrastructure are rather opaque is a challenge to direct empirical verification. In spite of trying to triangulate the data and implement the interpretive rigor, such limitations can impact the generalizability of the findings and need to be reflected when reflecting on the scope and implications of the study.

Historical and Political Situation.

The History of Hezbollah: Development of the Militia into a political player

Hezbollah was perceived as an Islamic resistance group, the Hezbollah, in the early 1980s in reaction to Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the influence region-wide of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Established ideologically and materially by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Hezbollah had initially placed itself as a radical Islamist militia that would drive Israeli troops out of southern Lebanon and fight against western imperialism (Norton, 2007). The group became widely known with the help of guerrilla warfare and suicide attacks, and the withdrawal of Israel in the southern part of Lebanon in 2000, which it presented as one of the most significant successes of its resistance story.

With this military triumph Hezbollah slowly increased its political involvement. By 2005, it had already gotten into the electoral arena of Lebanon, making alliances with other parties of the March 8 alliance. Its credibility was enhanced by the fact that it had a large system of social services particularly among the Shi'a community in Lebanon (Harb & Leenders, 2005). Nonetheless, the war with Israel in 2006 proved that Hezbollah still has a strong military potential that is comparable with the political engagement. Hezbollah still exercises considerable leverage in the Lebanese government today with its strong autonomous military wing that generates a dual identity that questions the traditional differentiation between the state and non-state actors.

The Lebanese Sectarian and Political Politics

The political system in Lebanon is characterized by the practice of confessionalism which is a power sharing system that allocates governmental roles to the 18 religious groups that are recognized in Lebanon. Institutionalized in the National Pact of 1943 and strengthened in the Taif Agreement of 1989, this system has established sectarianism as the structure of the Lebanese political system. Although this structure was meant to assure representation, it has also created fragmentation, clientelism, and periodic freezing of the state institutions (Makdisi & Marktanner, 2009). In this dynamic web, the Hezbollah has established itself as a sectarian force of the Shi'a people and as pan-Lebanese force of resistance. The military independence of the group and its alignment with Iran have been subject to criticism by Sunni and Christian groups, particularly those who affiliate themselves with the March 14 group, who consider Hezbollah to be undermining the Lebanese sovereignty. Political instability and economic crisis and foreign intervention have also bolstered central authority and this has created the environment in which Hezbollah can act with relative impunity. Its power is most evident in the southern parts of Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and south suburbs of Beirut whereby the state offers limited services, and the Hezbollah participants provide the essential needs of governance.

The Military Strategy and Security Doctrine of Israel against the Hezbollah

The change of Israel security doctrine against Hezbollah has greatly changed since the 1980s as the group no longer functions as a guerrilla group but a quasi-state group. The first one involved Israel seeking a buffer zone policy in southern Lebanon by using its proxy, South Lebanon Army and direct military presence in the country. Nevertheless, the ongoing Hezbollah assaults led to the unilateral withdrawal of Israel in 2000 where its policy changed to deterrence and containment. The war of 2006 signified something crucial. Notwithstanding superiority of the military to an overwhelming extent Israel was not able to defeat Hezbollah that

made rocket attacks across the border. This gave rise to the concept of the Dahiya Doctrine a policy of disproportionate retaliation with the aim of causing colossal damage and discouraging future aggression through striking the military infrastructure as well as the civilian supporting infrastructures (Cordesman, 2006).

Since then Israel has concentrated on intelligence-based precision strikes especially on destroying the missile system of Hezbollah and destabilizing the delivery of sophisticated weapons by Iran through Syria. The rise of the Precision Project, which is an endeavor of Hezbollah aiming to turn unguided rockets into precision-guided munitions, is now a red line on Israeli strategic thinking (Gordon and Cohen, 2020). More recently, in the wake of heightening tensions following the 2023 Israel-Hamas war, Israel has re-emphasized the pre-emptive airstrikes in southern Lebanon, a move that indicates a more aggressive stance to the north of the border, which means that the borderline between deterrence and offensive containment is unclear.

Tabular Representation: existing conflict Analysis

Category	Details
Timeline & Impact of Israeli Strikes	- Oct 2023–June 2024- Strikes on southern Lebanon, Beirut suburbs- Heavy casualties, infrastructure damage- Civilian displacement
Hezbollah's Responses	- Rocket/drone retaliation- Strategic messaging- Political defiance- Psychological operations against Israeli public
Public Perception	- Support in Shi'a areas- War fatigue in broader Lebanon- Arab world divided: praise in resistance-aligned states, criticism in Gulf monarchies
Regional Actors' Roles	- Iran: Logistics, arms, strategic coordination- Syria: Arms transit route- Hamas: Coordinated attacks- U.S./France/UNIFIL: Diplomatic pressures for restraint

The Future of Hezbollah

Hezbollah has been gradually transformed since its formation in the early 1980s to become more of a political force entrenched in Lebanon than a militant group of resistance forces. The institutionalization of the group in the Lebanese state apparatus is supported by its involvement in parliamentary elections, appointment of ministers, and in the March 8 coalition. The large welfare and education system of Hezbollah together with its political hegemony in Shiite dominated areas is another way of establishing its identity as not only a military organization but as a state within a state. This trend points to great likelihood of the survival of Hezbollah as a long-term political party, at least until the Lebanon confessional system is dismantled (Norton, 2007). The central state weakness in its ability to provide services and security in the regions that the group can service solidifies its status as a mandatory power broker in Lebanese politics and political marginalization of the group gradually becomes less likely with the current circumstances.

Nevertheless, its political normalization notwithstanding, Hezbollah has always underlined that its ability to resist relies on its military strength. The group also possesses an advanced and growing arsenal that consists of precision-guided missiles and drone technologies which it presents as a need to prevent Israeli aggression. The era after 2023 has also seen a revival of confrontational posture, as Hezbollah has been responding to

Israeli attacks by firing rockets with precision and using psychological deterrence measures. With regional tensions on the rise especially within the Israeli-Iranian rivalry, there is a possibility of Hezbollah getting involved in more military action either directly or via a proxy warfare with other actors such as Hamas. Not only is the danger of escalation quite high, but in case Hezbollah feels that its deterrence credibility was threatened, it will be at risk (Byman, 2011). Nevertheless, the prolonged military conflict will also threaten the international isolation and domestic opposition, especially in case the number of civilian victims increases or the economic situation deteriorates in Lebanon.

The legitimacy of Hezbollah is now more than disputable especially due to the multi-layered crises that happen in Lebanon. On the domestic front, the group has been accused of subverting state sovereignty and creating unwarranted confrontations which jeopardize national stability by critics who cut across sectarian lines. The 2019-2020 protest movement, also known as Thawra, manifested the general discontent with the ruling elite in Lebanon, including Hezbollah, whose anti-corruption and resistance discourse started to lose basis among younger and economically strapped citizens. On the international level, Hezbollah remains labeled as a terrorist group by major western and Gulf countries and this has led to its international isolation and economic limitation by imposing sanctions and restrictions on funding (Makdisi & Marktanner, 2009). Such pressures could not bring Hezbollah to the collapse of its central base however can undermine its wider legitimacy and make its long-term state of governance difficult, in case the Lebanese financial meltdown intensifies and the financial aid of the world is made conditional on political change.

Considering the variety of pressures and the dynamics of conflicts that change, the future of Hezbollah can develop in various adaptation scenarios. Institutional reform is one of the possibilities, in which the group further becomes integrated into the Lebanese state and slowly shifts its military participation to political participation. The other possibility is that of hybridization where Hezbollah remains both a militia and political party and it manages its strategies to maintain equilibrium between the external deterrence and internal legitimacy, to date, the model has proven quite successful. But there is another way that is not so desirable, and that is the slow decadence, caused by loss of domestic backing, economic unsustainability, and regional realignments which destroy its strategic depth. Hezbollah will also have a lot to do with the capacity of this organization to sail through the changing geopolitical tides, its capacity to cope with its relations with Iran, and how it responds to the aspirations of a frustrated Lebanese people who yearn to have democratic accountability and national sovereignty (Ranstorp, 2010).

Regional and International Implications.

Influence on the Relations between Israel and Lebanon.

The recent enmity between Israel and Hezbollah since late 2023 has only worsened Israel-Lebanon relations that are already unstable and has added to a long-running trend of hostility in the absence of diplomatic relations. Israel and Lebanon are technically at war, having neither official diplomatic relations nor under an armistice, just a 1949 armistice and the 2006 UN-negotiated ceasefire (UNSCR 1701). The Israeli airstrikes of southern Lebanon, and the retaliation of the Hezbollah by rockets, keep breaking this framework, both the sides accusing one another of violation of the sovereignty. The result of this action and reaction has embedded a lack of trust in each other and slowed any efforts to address the fundamental issues, such as the disputed Shebaa Farms territory and demarcation of maritime boundaries (even though developments in gas field talks have improved in 2022).

The ongoing intensification of the situation weakens the work of the UN peacekeeping and the risk of miscalculation resulting in the full-scale war, as well as the possibility of Lebanon to have an independent foreign policy because of the military independence of Hezbollah and its orientation towards Iran.

The core of the conflict is a larger power play in the region between Iran and its opponents. Hezbollah is considered one of the strategic branches of the Iranian axis of Resistance that included Syria, the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq and the Houthi rebels in Yemen. Iran employs Hezbollah to deter the Israeli attacks on their nuclear infrastructure as well as a tool of projecting power in the Levant. Tehran has been supportive in the form of funding, training and provision of advanced weapons that are usually channeled via Syria. The Hezbollah actions have been met with growing concern by the Gulf states particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as the group has been regarded as a tool of Iranian expansionism. The states have requested Lebanon to dissociate herself with the Hezbollah, and the diplomatic pressure and aid conditionality have played a role in shaping the political decisions of Beirut. In the meantime, Syria is also an important logistical center of the Hezbollah, and Israeli fire is often used to hit weapon-delivery convoy on its way to Lebanon. Weak stability in Syria implies that any upsurge in Lebanon may extend into the state, which would bring back some lines of conflict that lie dormant. Therefore, Hezbollah-Israel conflict is miniature of the regional conflicts with the alliances and visions of the Middle East order.

Policy Implications in the U.S and UN.

To the United States, the war poses a strategic problem. Although Washington still believes in the right of Israel to self-defense and is still willing to provide military aid, it does not want a broader war that will disrupt the region and ruin normalization with Arab countries (e.g., the Abraham Accords). Backchannel diplomacy between U.S. officials and Lebanese and Israeli players has involved de-escalation and alternatives to arms control or management of deterrence. Nonetheless, the U.S. declaration of the Hezbollah as a terrorist group restricts the possibility of direct interaction with the group, leaving not a lot of room to mediate. The United Nations and its agencies especially UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) is very important in monitoring and maintaining peace. The mandate of UNIFIL is however often limited by the untransparency of Hezbollah and unilateralism by the Israeli. Although Hezbollah is regularly urged to disarm under UNSCR 1701 that requires Hezbollah to be disarmed and Israel to respect Lebanese sovereignty, it is not well adhered to. This ongoing war reveals the weaknesses of the international institutions in solving asymmetric conflicts and in particular when the non-state actors are sufficiently powerful.

Today, the risks of the Wider Escalation, or Proxy War.

The existing course has a high potential of further escalation in the region, especially once Israel chooses to preemptively attack further within Lebanon or Iran, or once Hezbollah mounts mass attacks on Israeli cities. This would trigger a proxy war situation involving the Iranian allies in the region such as Iraqi militias and Houthis who have been already willing to launch attacks on U.S. and Israeli affiliated targets. At the same time, greater cooperation of the Israelis with the Arab countries such as Jordan and Egypt in intelligence and missile protection might trigger a multi-theatre war triggered by the Iranians in other fronts.

This division increases the possibility of wider instability, particularly with major global powers, Russia in Syria, Turkey in northern Lebanon and the U.S. in Iraq, all having overlapping but incompatible interests. The absence of a formal conflict resolution system between Israel and the Hezbollah coupled with the

strategic competition in the region and the poor state structures in Lebanon makes the probability of miscalculation very likely. One event like the killing of an Iranian/Israeli official in a powerful position, might trigger a regional escalation of war that has much farther consequences than Hezbollah-Israel border.

Recommendations

1. For Policymakers (Lebanon, Israel, and Regional Mediators)

- a. Enhance Diplomatic Engagement Channels: We need to find and improve indirect communication mechanisms and third-party mediation zones (ex: through UNIFIL or through intermediary countries such as Qatar or France) to prevent miscalculations and provide channels at least to agree on ceasefires and border security.
- b. Apply Conflict De-escalation Protocols: Have crisis management systems, such as hotlines of deconfliction and agreed upon red lines of when a tactical skirmish turns into a full-scale war particularly along the Blue Line and in sensitive border areas.
- c. Resolve Root Political Grievances: encourage efforts to eliminate the root causes of insecurity, such as unresolved border demarcations (e.g. Shebaa Farms), the position of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and the Iran-Israel tensions, not just by military containment.

For Lebanon

- a. Start a Phased Political Reform to Recover State Sovereignty: Promote reforms to enhance transparency, accountability, and inclusivity of the Lebanese system of confessions that today encourages sectarian fragmentation and allows parallel power systems such as that of Hezbollah.
- b. Introduce a National Disarmament and Defense Strategy: Hold an inclusive national dialogue, facilitated by neutral civil society actors and international facilitators, on the future of the Hezbollah armaments within the context of a wider vision of a common national policy of defense.
- c. Foster national unity by governing cross sectarian: encourage political coalition and civil society projects that cross sectarian identities and highlights national identities, economic resurgence and sovereignty to minimize reliance on non-state actors to provide protection and service delivery.

For International Actors

- a. Enhance the capacity and the authority of UNIFIL and other mechanisms to oversee the violations, mediate the incidences and involve both the state and non-state parties. Think of implementing online surveillance or satellite watching equipment in order to be more transparent.
- b. Offer Conditional Economic and Development Aid: Conditional financial aid to governance standards rewarding state institutions and diminishing the incentives to parallel governance forms so that aid strengthens legitimate national institutions instead of factional actors.
- c. Help Regional Security Dialogue: Assisted regional forums (e.g., Track II diplomacy or Arab League initiative) where Iran, Gulf States, and Levantine participants are involved to negotiate rules of engagement, norms of non-intervention, and conflict-resolution mechanisms, which are key to curtailing proxy warfare.

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