



□ Hezbollah's strategy of influence in South Lebanon 1/3

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Histoire & stratégie

Consequences of the Israeli operation Peace in Galilee (1982) which sees Tsahal penetrate in Lebanon, then became an opposition movement during the Lebanese civil war. As a result, Hezbollah has established itself as a key player both in the Arab-Israeli conflict and on the Lebanese domestic political (social and political) sphere. The nature of the Shia movement poses a problem of classification ; on one side, there's his branch... army considered as a terrorist organization by many countries and organizations such as the United States, the European Union, the Arab League or the Gulf Cooperation Council. On the other hand, there is a political offer through the so-called coalition du 8 March » which has obtained the majority of seats in the Lebanese Parliament in the last parliamentary elections ¹.

As a dual movement, Hezbollah is thus able to influence the Lebanese political scene while at the same time continuing its military activities, and first against Israel, which defines its raison d'être². Resist to Israel forms the DNA of the Shia movement : whether it's his political interventions or... military, Hezbollah motivates its actions by its opposition to its neighbour. However, an evolution seems to be taking shape, through Hezbollah's strong involvement in the Syrian conflict which the is torn between loyalty to a regime and a country - Syria - with which it shares a history. and the need to maintain a south-facing image and identity.

This article aims to understand the different vectors through which the movement exerts his influence. Nevertheless, the study of the means by which the Shia movement is constantly to underline its opposition to the Hebrew State, understand the influence of Hezbollah in Lebanon involves understanding the phenomenon in its entirety. Indeed, Hezbollah's strategy rests first of all on its ability to present itself and to represent - first of all in the eyes of the Shiites Lebanon, and then the Arab world as a whole - spearheading the fight against Israel.³. Also, the military, political-social and communicational strategies of the Party of God do not are not three separate strategies, but constitute one and the same strategy of influence. Fighting against Israel, for Hezbollah, therefore requires the creation of a

movement of influence. of popular guerrilla warfare, a umma⁴ protected and supported by the mujtama'.al-muqawamathe "society of resistance"⁵. Hezbollah's strategy of influence forms support and constitutes a pillar on which irregular warfare and political mobilisation are linked and civil.

Hezbollah's military strategy : war of attrition and operational influence

Pursuing a guerrilla strategy against Israel

In spite of the obvious asymmetry between the Jewish State and the the Shiite movement, Hezbollah has managed to impose itself as a military rival to Israel by adopting a strategy of guerrilla warfare and war of attrition. A document written by Haj Hallil, then director of operations for the Party of God, lists the thirteen strategic principles to which Hezbollah obeys, among which "reste constantly in motion, avoids the formation of a front line" or "nand don't engage in a real battle - vanish like smoke before the enemy cannot take advantage⁶ ». These principles demonstrate that Hezbollah is less interested in taking over and controlling territory, than to cause heavy casualties in the enemy ranks... before it can replicate using its capabilities... conventional capabilities. Perfectly aware that it cannot beat IDF in conventional warfare, Hezbollah reduces its rival's offensive and technological advantage by attracting the Israel Defense Army (IDA - IDF) on ur theatresbaths that he has mastered and on which he can make the fights last...⁷. Drawing on lessons learned from other conflicts, particularly in theVietnam, Hezbollah has given to the operations of psychological warfare a central place in its strategy of war of attrition. The concept of psychological warfare is based on the idea that enemy troops don't necessarily have to be eliminated; conflict can also be won through influence, by persuading soldiers to stop taking part in combat, or by convincing their leaders not to engage in the conflict⁸. Hezbollah thus carries out operations whose value tactics is debatable but the essential strategic impact, in order to to achieve far greater destabilizing effects. Thus., on September 18, 1997, his troops simultaneously bombed Twenty-five outposts of the South Lebanese Army (SLA), one militia group supported by the Israeli army, and stormed one of the them. While SLA soldiers barricaded themselves inside, Hezbollah fighters simply plant their flag on the outpost, salute him and then withdraw, showing that they are act where and when they want to⁹.

This strategy of combining guerrilla operations and war. . . psychological help save Hezbollah the time necessary to target, with its arsenal of rockets, the targets on Israeli territory. The 2006 war demonstrated that beyond their tactical effectiveness, the political impact and information about these strikes could give the movement a considerable advantage in the continuation of fighting¹⁰. By giving Hezbollah a deterrent or deterrent capacity to coercion towards Israel, they have thus become central in his military strategy. According to the intelligence services of the Hebrew State, the Lebanese movement would have more than 130,000 rockets and missiles¹¹. In comparison, in the early days of the 2006 war, he only had 15,000. Thus, in a future conflict, it would be able to fire up to 1,000 rockets... per day¹². At the same time, the Party of God has developed its abilities... to deny access to coastal areas, as it proved in 2006... by attacking the corvette Hanit. He can thus threaten Israel, at the times, targeting its military fleet and economic capabilities, since Tel Aviv depends on its access to the sea for 99% of its exports and for its access to certain natural resources¹³.

Hezbollah draws from this hybrid formation between a movement. . . guerrilla warfare and a

conventional army, a clear advantage... operational. In 2006 in particular, the division's forces between "village slates" and "special units" trained by the Iranian and Syrian armies allowed him to hold head at IDF used to low-intensity operations in Palestinian territories¹⁴. These military capabilities particularly sophisticated for non-state movement have brought about some observers to characterize Hezbollah's armed wing of "milice trained as an army and equipped as a one state"¹⁵.

An evolving military strategy

This strategy is based on operational credibility manifest.

From the late 1990s to the 2006 conflict, Hezbollah has consistently demonstrated notable capabilities in intelligence, ambushes, and command matters and control of rocket units and indirect fire. This tactical performance allowed him to drive sophisticated operations and incur losses proportionately lower than those of the ADI or the SLA. This war of attrition has also allowed it to modify favourably its strategic position within Lebanon. Thus in the ceasefire agreement following the operation Grapes of Wrath In 1996, Hezbollah pledged not to shoot any more rockets on northern Israel in exchange for the SLA pledge and the ILA to stop attacking, either directly or indirectly, to Lebanese civilians. By giving greater legitimacy domestic legitimacy to the Shia movement, this compromise was a factor of increased legitimacy and a gain to expand its armed activities within Lebanon¹⁶.

If Hezbollah continues to rely primarily on a strategy of war of attrition, its political developments, since At the end of the conflict in 2006, it seems to have changed its priorities.

From a non-State actor with essentially local roots, the In many ways, the movement has become a quasi-state seeking to sustain its political influence . The death struggle with Israeli forces was followed by a desire to ban the movement from Lebanese territory . This defensive choice is explained by the absorption of its forces into the Syrian conflict, in which between 7,000 and 9,000 Hezbollah fighters are engaged. The movement seeks to avoid a conflict on two fronts, and thus with Israel, when most of its forces are already engaged in other operations .¹⁷. Thus, Hezbollah's military strategy is increasingly focused on strengthening its military presence within Lebanon, especially along the southern border or in the Bekaa plain, where it has allegedly built bunkers and training camps.¹⁸. Hezbollah's military strategy therefore focuses above all on the defense of the Resistance.¹⁹.

Hezbollah's socio-political strategy: mobilising society as a support to the fight against Israel

Hezbollah, from weapons to the ballot box

Because of its hybrid nature, halfway between guerrilla and conventional warfare, the movement's military strategy is also based on a pronounced social mobilization. The strategists of the revolutionary war have amply demonstrated that a militarily weaker army could defeat an enemy... higher education, including ensuring population control, both a recruitment pool and a source of information²⁰. Hezbollah fits perfectly into this logic by weaving carefully the links with society in a defined space by geographical criteria, and to a lesser extent denominations.

From a simple militia, the Party of God has become a political player... inescapable and legitimate in Lebanon. The first elections organized in the aftermath of the war in 1992, however, have posed a dilemma for Hezbollah. Unlike its rival Amal, which had gradually been co-opted into the political system... confessional and thus indirectly accepted the occupation of the In Israel, Hizbollah rejected the legitimacy of the political process. The movement conceived its political participation outside the system, by proposing an Islamic alternative to a system deemed corrupt and unjust. The Taif Agreement signed in 1989, which rebalanced political representation in parliament in favour of Muslim communities ,put an end to fighting between militias .

From then on, it was important for Hezbollah to find another way to prove his advocacy role Shiite interests. In addition, the movement was in an in-between, having been the only militia allowed to retain his weapons, which de facto recognized his role as a Resistance fighter national, not just confessional, against Israel. From then on, Hezbollah had no choice but to open the resistance to other communities. The movement has allied itself with parties non-Shiites for the elections, winning twelve seats, eight of which were won by the Shiites²¹.

The political evolution of the movement has continued the following years towards a standardization until they reach the government²². This choice, dictated by one more political life polarized between supporters and opponents of the great Syrian neighbour, also marks the increased role of Hezbollah as it becomes the institutional actor. This political integration is justified and is based on military performance and the existence of a base social; à contrariopolitical enemies are denounced as an extension of the Israeli threat. For example, after the war of 2006 and just before the resignation of six ministers pro-Hezbollah, the movement called the political unrest which the country was then experiencing, of "the extension of Israel's war against Lebanon»²³. However, in order to maintain its influence on the political scene, Hezbollah has also demonstrated its ability to adapt one's positions. This pragmatism is found elsewhere. Also, from its initial objective of the creation of an Islamic state in Lebanon, which was found in in its 1985 open letter, Hezbollah has "libanized» his speech and focused on the defence of the country²⁴. The ideological ferment pre-1992 religious leaders have moved to denounce the feeling that of oppression of the Lebanese population as a whole²⁵.

As a result, the evolution of its positioning with respect to to other faiths, already initiated in the 1992 elections, has been confirmed. Christians have become potential partners, as demonstrated in the Memorandum of Mutual Understanding signed with Michel Aoun's Courant patriotique libre in 2006, while candidates from other faiths or communities have been included in Hezbollah's electoral lists. The movement also opened its militia, the Brigades Lebanese Women of the Resistance, to other communities²⁶. Such a change was indeed necessary to be able to claim that the be supported by a majority within the country. Hezbollah has thus legitimised itself and established itself as a political player... unavoidable²⁷.

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4 The community of believers in Islam, in the broadest sense.

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6 Iver Gabrielsen, "The evolution of Hezbollah's strategy and military performance, 1982-2006," Small Wars & Insurgencies, No. 25:2, 2014, pp. 257-283.

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11 These estimates are hypothetical and do not take into account the different types of rockets available to Hezbollah and the different types of rockets used by Hezbollah. On the other hand, the fragility in terms of human resources caused by the fighting in Syria.

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24 Khatib, Matar and Alshaer, The Hizbullah phenomenon..., op. cit.

25 Colin J. Morrissey, Hezbollah: Armed resistance to political participation Thesis, Monterrey Naval Academy, 2014.

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