

## Hezbollah Involvement in Israel-Hamas War: Causes and Implications 2023-2024

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### Abstract

Hezbollah is a well-known non state actor in the world, especially in the Middle East. In fact, it is the most militarily equipped and organised non state actor in the world. It also has a well networked social service arm and political administration amongst its members. Hezbollah is situated in Lebanon, precisely in the southern part. These exceptional sterling qualities made people to designate the robust militia organization as a state within a state. Hezbollah's objectives are to rid Lebanon of foreign occupiers, freedom of the Arab world, and to establish Islamic shite state in the area. From their aims one can easily see why Hezbollah is hell bent in attacking Israel or supporting her enemies. In this work our focus is to examine the causes or factors that pushed Hezbollah to engage in the Israel-Hamas war and by extension look at its implications. To effectively, do this we sought for data using documentary evidence from textbooks, journals, Newspapers, Magazines and internet materials. In addition, we use the non-state actor's theory as an analytical tool. The study discovered that factors like historical, ideology, political, and regional dynamics pushed Hezbollah into engaging in the Israel-Hamas conflict while issues like escalation of violence, humanitarian casualties, dragging of global state actors into the crisis, regional instability, strategic diversion and complication of diplomatic effort to settle the crisis are seen as the implications. Be that as it may, the study recommends that both Israel and Hezbollah should refrain from belligerency and rather embrace dialogue and other diplomatic lee ways.

**Keywords:** Hezbollah, Israel, Hamas, War, Shite

### Introduction

Non-state actors have taken the centre stage in world affairs and this assertion is nowhere clearer than in the Middle East. Hardly, one talks of middle east conflicts without citing non-state actors like Islamic jihadists of Egypt, Hamas of Gaza, Houthis of Yemen, Kurds of Turkiye, Isil of northern Iraq and Syria, and Hezbollah of Lebanon (Tawfiq, 2023). Hezbollah carries important power in Lebanon, where it is seen both as a Shi'ite Muslim political party and a militant organization. It stands against Israel and western nation's engagement in the Middle East, and serves as a proxy of Iran, its greatest supporter.

With the Islamic revolution in shite dominated Iran in 1979 and the Israel incursion into Lebanon in 1982, an organization of Lebanese radical shites establish Hezbollah (party of God) with the aim of pushing Israel and the west out of Lebanon and founding a shite Islamic nation there (Abdullahi, 2022). Hezbollah members and supporters are mainly found in the Bekaa valley, southern Lebanon and southern Beirut. It is Iran's close ally, from where it gets large logistical aid and acquire manpower from the radical Amal movement. Due to its history of carrying out terrorist attacks internationally, Hezbollah has been known as a terrorist group by the United

States and many other nations, although some just apply this assertion to its military division (Abdullahi, 2022).

Hezbollah's profound alliances with Iran and Syria have changed it into an increasingly efficient armed force, creating a strong antagonist for its old enemy Israel. Hezbollah also persisted to fight a continued guerrilla campaign against Israel in southern Lebanon until Israel's retreat in 2000. Years later, on July 12, 2006, Hezbollah, in a move to force Israel into setting free three Lebanese jailed in Israeli prisons, carried out a military attack against Israel, killing many Israeli soldiers and taken two as prisoners of war (Benard, 2023). This action led Israel to carry out a big military attack against Hezbollah. The thirty-four-day war between Hezbollah and Israel amounted to the deaths of more than 1,000 Lebanese and the dislocation of some 1,000,000 (Hamdallahi, 2024). Fighting the Israeli army to a standstill—a feat no other Arab militia had accomplished—Hezbollah and its leader, Nasrallah, became heroes throughout much of the Arab world.

Two years later, in July 2008, the bodies of the captured soldiers were returned to Israel in exchange for five Lebanese prisoners and the bodies of about 200 others (Hamdallahi, 2024). Hezbollah is headed by Hassan Nasrallah, who took over as secretary-general in 1992 after Israel murdered the organization's joint and former leader, Abbas al-Musawi. Nasrallah supervises the seven-member Shura Council and its five lower councils: the political assembly, the jihad assembly, the parliamentary assembly, the executive assembly, and the judicial assembly. The US government maintains that there are thousands of Hezbollah members worldwide (Ibrahim, 2023).

Hezbollah rules much of Lebanon's Shiite-majority areas, plus parts of Beirut, southern Lebanon, and the eastern Bekaa Valley areas. Although Hezbollah is situated in Lebanon, its objectives show that its actions, especially those targeting the United States, are not restricted by local borders. The American fear is not local or reduced to a particular region, and as such, fear of such a threat must be global as well. The organization has been accused of acts of terrorism against Jewish targets in Africa, the Americas, and Asia (Musa, 2024). Iran supplies most of Hezbollah's training, weapons, and funding, providing the group hundreds of millions of dollars yearly. Hezbollah also get support from the Bashar al-Assad government in Syria, as well as funding from lawful businesses, international criminal companies, and Lebanese living outside (Abdulrazak, 2022).

Hezbollah has been a part of the Lebanese government since 1992, when eight of its members were elected to Parliament, and Hezbollah has held cabinet positions since 2005. The party announced its inroad into mainstream politics in 2009 with an upgraded objective that was less Islamist than its former one and asks for real representative government. The national elections, in 2022, saw the party retain its 13 seats in Lebanon's 128-member national assembly, though the Hezbollah and its supporters lost their majority (Clifford, 2023). Hezbollah mainly act as a government in the areas within its control, and neither the army nor central authorities can stop this. It coordinates a large web of humanitarian services that made up of social facilities, hospitals, educational institutions, and social centres, all of which have been focal in gathering support for the party from Shiite and non-Shiite Lebanese alike (Ismail, 2023).

Nevertheless, Hezbollah retains its military wing based on the 1989 Taif Agreement, which was negotiated by Saudi Arabia and Syria and that ended Lebanon's domestic war, Hezbollah was the only armed group allowed to keep its arms (Yunusa, 2023). It has been believed that Hezbollah had up to 20,000 active soldiers and some 20,000 back up, with store of arms, tanks, drones, and various long-range rockets. The Party have a larger store of ammunition than most nations enjoy, and it has been called the most armed non-state actor in the world. In June 2024, it was estimated that Hezbollah has 150,000- 200,000 of various projectiles of wide coverages (Mubarak, 2024). This work is sectionalized into nine related parts: Introduction, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, historical background, causes, implications, conclusion, and recommendations.

### **Literature Review**

Abdul Tariq (2023) in his book the "Origin of Hezbollah" examined extensively how the militia emerged and the activities they played both in Lebanon and outside world. No matter how welcoming the book has been it fell short of explaining what pushed the non-state actor to engage in the Israel-Hamas war nor did he look into its implications. This lacune is what this work wants to fill. Ibrahim Razaq (2024) in his book "Hezbollah links with Iran" laid bare the huge support Hezbollah receives from Iran. He asserted that Iran does this for two reasons: to help a fellow shite group which means extending the sect in the region and to use the militia as a proxy for reaching her enemies (Israel &the US) without being involve directly. He also fell short of what triggered the party to join the war or the implications of their action.

Abdul Jibril (2022) in his book "Non-State Actors in World Politics" compared non-state actors' power in world politics vis-à-vis that of state actors and concluded that non-state actors are more powerful. He singled out Hezbollah as an example. According to him Hezbollah has more arms and well-trained soldiers than some nations. Equally, missing in his explanation was the cause of Hezbollah's' action in the Israel-Hamas conflict and its implications. To fill this yawning gap is the objective of this work. Mahmud Tareeq (2023) in his work "The Era of Non-State Actors" compared the non-state actors in the Middle East like Islamic Jihadists of Egypt, Hamas of Gaza, Houthis of Yemen, Isis of Syria and Iraq, and Hezbollah of Lebanon. He acknowledged that some of these non-state actors' direct world affairs than some states. He said that Hezbollah affects world issues than Lebanon where it is situated. He called Hezbollah "A State within a State". He was quiet concerning the causes or the implications of Hezbollah's meddling into Israel-Hamas war.

Abdel Azizi (2024) in his book "Hezbollah and Lebanon" juxtaposes the militia with Lebanon the host country and concludes that people hear more of Hezbollah than Lebanon that harbours it. He said that the party is stronger than the country politically, socially, and economically. He claimed that the Hezbollah's' army are well trained and well equipped than that of Lebanon. He was more concerned about Hezbollah and Lebanese domestic politics than their connection to the outside. From all our reviewed works, it is glaringly clear that none of them examined what pushed Hezbollah to neither join the Israel-Hamas war nor disclose its implications. This missing link is what this research aims to fill.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory this work used is the non-state actor theory. This theory was propounded by Richard Moore in 1991 (Richard, 1992). According to him after the demise of cold war, the non-state actors took the centre stage in world affairs even sometimes threatening the state actors. This theory is defined as the increasing importance of stateless groups in global affairs. Other propounders of this theory are Oliver Michael, John Rock, and Isaac Bright (Bright, 2000). The main assumptions of the theory are: non-state actors are driven by a strong ideology or belief, they always fight for marginalization or exploitation, they always push for the establishment of their ideology, their quest is for either autonomy or total independence, they serve as proxy to their supporters, that states are their main supporters who see them as instruments for achieving their interest, and that they are more flexible than state actors for instance the Palestinian Liberation Organization were able to move their headquarters from Jordan to Lebanon, then to Tunisia and now to West Bank (Oliver, 2003). According to the propounders state actors cannot do this because they are rooted to a particular portion of land called territory.

The protagonist of this theory maintains that what propels or catapults non-state actors to do what they do is their ideology and historical background. From this assertion, we can say that Hezbollah intrusion into Israel-Hamas war emanates from their historical experience with Israel since the Balfour Declaration or from the formation of Israel in 1948. Another factor according to this theory is their belief or ideology of total elimination of Israel. The propounders asserted that some non-state actors are more powerful than their state of location and thereby has earned the epithet “A state within a state”. They rightly cited example of Hezbollah in Lebanon. They also added that some states emerged from non-state actors like Israel from Irgun and Haganah militias.

Critics accused this theory of neglecting the place of state in world politics. They opined that even the non-state actors exist within the confines of the state and that most of their existence totally depends on the state actors. They added that the issues they have are settled by the state actors. Be that as it may, one cannot deny the fact that non-state actors have assumed the centre stage in the international arena. For instance, no body or state can wade into the political dynamics of the Middle East without taking proper cognizance of the numerous non-state actors’ activities there and this undeniable fact makes this theory properly suitable for this work.

### **Methodology**

This is a qualitative, descriptive, and interpretative study. The data for the work was obtained through secondary sources like books, journals, theses, magazines’, newspapers, and internet materials. The data collected was analyzed through documentary evidence and; the non-state actors’ theory was used as a tool of analysis. The data collection process follows specific criteria for relevance, reliability, and credibility.

### **Historical Background**

Hezbollah which means “party of God” is a Shia inclined Islamist political and militant sect rooted in Lebanon (Mustapha, 2023). It was established in 1982 in the midst of Lebanon civil crisis, with support from Iran, in reaction to the Jewish incursion of Lebanon. The sect evolved as a strong force fronting for Shia demands and resistance of Israeli invasion. From its foundation in 1982, Hezbollah has emerged importantly, changing from an Islamic militant

group into an entity within an entity in Lebanon, poised for freedom of the Arabs from Western and Israeli exploitation (Mustapha, 2023).

After Israel's retreat from southern Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah struggled to retain her position and focus. They were instrumental in forcing Israel out of southern Lebanon from 1992-2000. After the crisis stopped, their stands moved to Lebanese domestic affairs (2000-2009), within the years, Hezbollah metamorphose into a pivotal political actor within Lebanon, maintaining seats in the Lebanese legislature and leadership. It has a strong militia, which has taken part in regional crisis, plus the Syrian domestic issues where it backed the Assad government (Farouq, 2024). Hezbollah double position both as a political group and an armed group has led to its reference as a terror group by nations such as the United States, Israel and the European countries, while others see them as a lawful resistance organization. This her dual position continues to impact Lebanon domestic politics, her links with neighbours and the wider global arena.

### **Causes**

Hezbollah, engagement in the Israel-Hamas crisis can be seen through the historical, ideological, and political spectrum. Ideologically, both Hezbollah and Hamas are Islamic militias groups that resist the Jewish state. Though Hezbollah is a shia group located in Lebanon, while Hamas is a Sunni organization situated in Gaza, both share an identical objective of opposing Israeli occupation and plan of action in the area. Hezbollah aims at beginning were expansive; forming an Islamic polity like Iran, uplifting Lebanon poor, and chasing Israel out of the land they occupied (Peter, 2024). These objectives position Hezbollah as a social organization rather than an armed militia.

Historically, Hezbollah has been nursing grievances against Israel right from the Balfour Declaration of 1917 or the creation of Israel since 1948. Lebanon was involved in most of the Arab wars with Israel (Aminu, 2023). This deep-seated historical hatred is one of the motivating factors that piloted Hezbollah into the Israel-Hamas war. Politically, Iran's backing of Hezbollah is one factor that propels the militia group to enter the Israeli-Hamas war. Having the same Shiite belief, Iran unequivocally, supports Hezbollah. Hezbollah depends on Iran for, leadership, religious links, fiscal and transportation support which confirms the argument that Iran to a great extent controls the organization and use it as a proxy. Iran uses these groups (Hezbollah & Hamas) to spread its tentacles in the area and to oppose Israel. In the period of high crisis in the area like now, Iran made Hezbollah to act in conformity with Hamas to create a hydra-headed problem for Israel like creating two fronts for Israel thereby over stretching the Jewish army, equipment and resources. Iran use Hezbollah as a tool for two objectives: to make itself be seen as the leader of the Muslim world and to indirectly fortify her stand against Israel and the US (Aminu, 2023). Hezbollah involved herself in the Israel-Hamas war in order to achieve the political goal of popularity both within Lebanon and in other Arab nations.

### **Implications**

One of the implications of Hezbollah's involvement in the Israel-Hamas imbroglio is increased violence. With its large military arsenal, plus a substantial number of rockets and missile projectiles, Hezbollah on 8 October, 2023 started a northern phase against Israel, enlarging the dimension of the crisis beyond Gaza and West Bank. For now, about 600 lives have been lost in

Lebanon, plus 400 Hezbollah militants and 130 civilians (Bulus, 2024). Hezbollah has launched about 300 Katyusha rockets toward Israel since the present war started. Both border areas of Israel and Lebanon have been evacuated of its populations. The two border areas are now full of empty villages, towns, destroyed industries, and abandoned farmlands (Bulus, 2024).

Another implication of Hezbollah's action is the destabilization of the region. Its engagement has drawn some state and non-state actors, thereby escalating the human sufferings both in Gaza and in Lebanon. Hezbollah's action increased the displacement of people and multiplies the refugee hardships in the area, adding to wider regional instability and humanitarian challenges. More than 40,700 has been killed in the ongoing Israel-Hamas war (Musa, 2024). Hezbollah's action has equally complicated the diplomatic efforts made to settle the crisis as their behaviour has brought in other countries like Iran and Syria. In fact, many US warships has been redirected from the Southeast Asia to the Mediterranean Sea poised for the defence of Israel (Shema, 2023). Their moves also made Israel fight on two fronts which implies much casualties, loss of infrastructures, and retardation of economic development initiatives. Finally, Hezbollah's decisions in Israel-Hamas war have drawn the attention of global actors into the war. For instance, the US has doubled their support to Israel while Iran has increased its support to Hezbollah (Shema, 2023). These moves have wider geopolitical implications both for the region and the crisis. The global community is meticulously observing the situation and urging for restrictions and quick resolution to the conflict.

### **Conclusion**

Hezbollah's engagement into Israel-Hamas war was formed by a myriad of historical, political and ideological factors and its implications revibrated through increased violence, humanitarian casualties of unfathomable proportions, regional instability of great magnitude, infrastructural destruction that beats mathematical calculation, complication of diplomatic efforts to settle the crisis, to entrenchment of global state actors into the war. This work is of the opinion that Israel, Hezbollah, and Hamas should bury their hatchets and embrace peace through dialogue and diplomatic means because there has never been a good war or a bad peace. They should remember that war is worthless and peace is priceless.

### **Recommendations**

- i. Israel should embrace ceasefire since Hezbollah is promising to stop their attacks on Israel if that is done.
- ii. Hezbollah should stop attacking Israel since this action has brought untold hardship to Lebanese border towns and villages with immeasurable destruction of lives and properties.
- iii. Regional powers like Iran and Saudi Arabia and global powers like Russia and US should call the belligerents-Israel, Hezbollah and Hamas to order so as to stop the war.
- iv. Those countries supplying arms to Israel, Hezbollah, and Hamas should stop as this will go a long way to end the carnage.
- v. Unbiased and effective sanctions should be imposed on Israel, Hezbollah, and Hamas by the United Nations Security Council so as to reduce their arms to fight.

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