

Understanding the Power of Hezbollah: the Secret to its Victories, and its Permanence in the Lebanese Political Arena

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Abstract

Over the past four decades, Hezbollah has thrived in achieving widespread political and military success in Lebanon. All this while the group has been under constant external pressure as well as internal conspiracies to weaken it. The main question that comes to mind is, 'how was Hezbollah able to overcome these problems? And what is the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in this regard? The research hypothesis emphasizes Hezbollah's strengthening of its soft power as well as the impact of the Islamic Revolution's pattern on the successes of Hezbollah. The result, with the descriptive-analytical method, shows that Lebanon's Hezbollah relies on the concepts of divine grace and help, the culture of resistance, jihad, and martyrdom, the spiritual position of the Leadership and the principle of The guardianship of the Islamic jurist (Velayat-e Faqih), courage and resilience against foreign enemies, Acting to serve the deprived areas, and the proper use of media, which joined together have strengthened Hezbollah's soft power. Accordingly, Hezbollah's soft power has continuously reproduced, and along with its hard power, it has become a factor that contributes to Hezbollah's admiration. That is why much of the West's efforts, after failing to disarm Hezbollah, have been to defeat and silent its soft power.

Keywords: Soft Power, Lebanon, Hezbollah, Israel, Iran, Sayyed Hassan Nasrollāh.

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Understanding the Power of Hezbollah: The Secret to its Victories, and its Permanence in the Lebanese Political Arena

112

Introduction

Developments in recent decades in the field of international relations indicate the importance of culture in achieving goals and improving relationships between states. In this context, we witness the emergence and formation of cultural unions nowadays on the global level to resolve international conflicts and challenges and hence lead to the proximity between states and nations. Thus, gaining international prestige and influence in public opinion, or in other words, access to soft power, is one of the essential and unspecified goals of countries' diplomacy in the field of international politics.

The cultural opportunities and capacities of each country pursued in different ways and mechanisms. Governments are now seeking to consolidate the epistemological foundations of their culture and generalize the values, knowledge, and attitudes generated beyond their geographical boundaries, to bring one of the tools of power (soft power) alongside political and military power (hard power) and with its help and instead of using force, the mechanism of cultural persuasion should align the minds and public opinion of the world in line with their interests and goals.

It pursues following the situation, position, facilities, opportunities, and cultural capacities of each country in different ways and mechanisms. Governments are now seeking to consolidate the epistemological foundations of their culture and generalize the values, knowledge, and attitudes generated beyond their geographical boundaries, to bring one of the tools of power (soft power) alongside political and military power (hard power). By that, and instead of using force, the mechanism of cultural persuasion should align the minds and public opinion of the world in line with a government's interests and goals (Tohid Fam, 2003:45).

The scientific consensus of social thinkers was heralding the transition from the second wave of civilization to the "Information Age" in the developed world and the expansion of rational relations in the developing world. When the end of the ideological age in the "Global Village" declared as a new approach, as a result of some political, social, and cultural evolutions, a glorious revolution happened in Iran, which surprised the world as it relied on soft power.

With the victory of this great revolutionary movement, religious and spiritual power had a significant role in political equations and global decisions. Also, ethical, mental, and cultural values, had a considerable impact on international relations, as well as comprehensive and unique decisions. Ayatollah Khomeini (as the founder of this revolution), revived the culture of resistance and jihad and introduced it to Islamic countries.

One of the countries that received the most influence from the Islamic Revolution of Iran was Lebanon. Lebanon's Hezbollah, which arose from the heart of the Amal movement, since the very beginning, chose resistance as a way to triumph over Israel, and influenced by the Islamic Revolution of Iran, it stood in the face of American and Israeli schemes in the region.

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1. The Concept of Soft Power

Power is the central concept of a new political theory. Most politicians acknowledge that power is the core of politics and believe that "what differentiates political relations from other sorts of human relations is power" (Alem, 1994: 89). Some believe that power is the potential and ability to do things. Others think that power is the ability to achieve desired results. Another opinion says that power means having an impact on others and making them accomplish what we want. This definition seems to be more comprehensive (Beigi, 2009:35).

According to Joseph Nye, the first to discuss the concept of soft power, the soft power is something like the weather, everyone talks about it, but a few people understand it (Nye, 2008:37-38). Nye divides power into two parts; hard and soft. Hard power is that which is concrete and visible such as the military and economy, which might get people to change their positions. Hard power can rest on persuasion "Carrots" or threats "Sticks." But sometimes you can get the outcomes you want without substantial risks or payoffs. The indirect way to get what you wish to has sometimes called "The Second Face of Power."

Soft power also includes rational issues and public values. Here we can say that "soft power; is like an attractive behavior that is visible but invisible. Whether it is soft power or cultural power, it invests in mindsets and takes advantage of the appeal to share values and all desires. From this perspective, "Soft Power" refers to those capabilities and abilities that indirectly affect the resources or behaviors of other countries by using tools such as culture, ideals, or moral values. Therefore, from Nye's perspective, soft power (cultural power) is exercised when one state forces other states to do what it wants. The ability to influence what other countries wish to is related to intangible resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions" (Schiller, 1998:100).

Joseph Nye initially used soft power to describe the actions of one state over other states to accept its goals without resistance. Still, over time he admitted that non-governmental actors could also have soft power. That is

why he used the same principle to analyze the Israeli war against Lebanon's Hezbollah in the 33-day war of 2006 and, ultimately, the victory of the Lebanese side. He explicitly stated that the concept of soft power could also include non-governmental religious and cultural actors seeking to influence policymakers' decisions. In his view, Israel used its hard military force in a way that increased Hezbollah's soft power and legitimacy in the Arab world (Nye, 2009). By adopting a strategy and misjudging the extent and quality of the possible damage caused by the war, Israel had both lost the battlefield and gave legitimacy of Hezbollah (Poor Ahmadi, 2010:57). This victory somehow increased the soft power of the Islamic resistance in the international arena.

1.2. The Islamic Resistance

Similarly, Nye noted that for decades, there existed religious movements that enjoyed soft power (Nye, 2004:98). We witness these movements in their different dimensions across the world. One of the most essential and effective religious changes that came to light in the Arab world during the 80s is Hezbollah; the Islamic movement in Lebanon. This movement carried the same ideology as that of the Islamic revolution of Iran, depending on its power to defeat the enemy (Israel). (Struhar, 2006:2) It is why Iran considers Lebanon's Hezbollah as "the tip of the spear" in terms of fighting Israel (Tantre, 1997:111), and it embraced Hezbollah and provided spiritual support to the movement at the forefront of its policies (based on the principle of supporting the oppressed). The Hezbollah resistance movement arose from the heart of the Shia community in Lebanon in the face of Israeli occupation, which gave Hezbollah power and swayed in Lebanon and the Arab world. Through the support of Iran, the Shias in Lebanon were able to revive their position in the Lebanese political arena (Mansour, 2008:951).

The teachings of the Islamic revolution influenced Hezbollah in such a manner that the group used the resistance model and adopted methods to fight Israel and defeat it. The most important of these methods relies on the sharp ideological logic, which is capable of reasoning such actions and satisfies the conscience. This ideology allows the person to believe that his act is not a crime, but rather a legitimate and correct operation to arrive at a higher goal. The following are among the most critical components of the soft power of the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon on the Muslims of the world, Shias in particular. It is worth noting that these components are original models from the Islamic revolution of Iran that were adopted by Lebanon's resistance with the attempt of producing a similar power as that of the Iranian revolution:

1. Relying on divine grace and help
2. Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist and the role of the leadership
3. Strengthening the spiritual power of Hezbollah through the presence of the clergy at the heart of the Islamic resistance
4. Spreading the culture of resistance by relying on the concepts of jihad and martyrdom
5. Patience, perseverance, and steadfastness in the face of adversity
6. Courage in the face of threats and preserving security
7. Fighting and resisting the Israeli regime
8. Acting to serve the people of deprived and war-torn areas in Lebanon
9. Using media abilities for mental imagery

2. The Components of the Soft Power of Hezbollah

2.1. Relying on Divine Grace and Help

Jeffrey Haynes (2010) considers religion and its teachings to be one of the essential sources of soft power in the world that can have international implications. Religious beliefs, mainly relying on divine help, create tremendous power for many non-governmental actors, which allows them to preserve their ideals. For followers of divine religions, especially those who believe in Islam, the most potent source of power and strength for believers, is divine grace and support. They think that they are bestowed with divine protection and are supported by eternal divine power when struggling with tyranny and tyrants. According to Islamic and Quranic beliefs, spiritual care considered a great source of energy that provides unwavering support and protection to Muslims fighting oppression (Mohammadi, 2010:105).

For Muslim believers, metaphysics is essential and witnessed in direct and indirect divine support. Victory in Islamic thought is attributable to divine intervention and miracles many times. It is what some secular sources say is the strategic genius of Prophet Mohammad, like in the battle of Badr. The action of Badr was decisive in the history of Islam as a turning point towards future conquests. The Quranic account assigns great importance to the battle as it is discussed lengthily in the chapter of "al-Anfal" (The Spoils of War) where it speaks of divine intervention that allowed victory for the much smaller army of the Muslims possible.

“O, you who have believed, when you meet those who disbelieve advancing [for battle], do not turn to them your backs [in flight]. And you did not kill them, but it was Allah who killed them. And you threw not, [O Muhammad], when you threw, but it was Allah who threw that. He might

Understanding the Power of Hezbollah: The Secret to its Victories, and its Permanence in the Lebanese Political Arena

116

test the believers with a good test. Indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing (Al-Anfal: 16 - 17).

And remember when you were few and oppressed in the land, fearing that people might abduct you, but He sheltered you, supported you with His victory, and provided you with good things - that you might be grateful” (Al-Anfal: 26).

According to these Quranic verses, Divine support, help, and grace are always accompanying those Muslims who fight injustice. It is one of the strongest beliefs of Lebanon’s Hezbollah, which is supported by the facts of the 2006 July war, where the power of the Israeli army and resistance group in terms of military assets, equipment, logistics, and forces were unbalanced. And in the Israeli army capacity outgrew that of Hezbollah in terms of quantity and quality. Based on this experience, one can estimate that the most important factor that serves as a source of power for the Islamic resistance is this divine assistance and support, and this belief that ultimate spiritual support exists. Not only does this belief make the resistance movement secure but also strengthens the faith of resistance fighters in its war against Israeli occupation and aggression against ISIS and similar terrorist groups or any other aggressive group that usurps rights and freedoms. This spiritual support and backup remain to be one of the big secrets of success in Hezbollah.

2.2. Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist and the Role of the Leadership

Hezbollah's main feature, compared to other Islamist groups in the Arab world, is the full acceptance of the theory of Guardian jurist (Velayat-e Faqih) and the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. This feature has dominated all organizational pillars as well as Hezbollah's views and, in fact, one of the two main reasons for the integration of small Islamist groups in Lebanon (in 1982) and the formation of Hezbollah. Hezbollah, in Lebanon, in manual about its history and views, states: Regarding guardianship of the Islamic jurist, we consider ourselves committed to the high guardianship's authority. Custody in the Supreme Leader of the Jurisprudence in which justice, Knowledge, adequacy, awareness of current issues, management, loyalty and other necessary attributes manifested in him. “This Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist and religious authority has the ability of religious, political and Muslim leadership” (Hezbollah, No Date: 19).

From the beginning of its establishment, Hezbollah considered its relationship with Ayatollah Khomeini to be the relationship between Imam and his followers. For this reason, Hezbollah's leadership cadres, whenever they come to meet Ayatollah Khomeini, they presented a report on the

situation and benefited from his guidance and advice. It can see in Hezbollah's explicit letter to the oppressed of the world. In this letter, as mentioned: "We are the sons of the nation of Hezbollah, God helped its pioneers in Iran to re-establish the core of the world's first Islamic central government. We declare our commitment to the unique leadership, wisely, and justly orders of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. They now represented in the person of Ayatollah Ruhollah Mousavi Khomeini. He is the instigator of the Muslim revolution and their great movement, and this rule continues during the leadership of Ayatollah Khamenei (Asadollahi, 2000: 191-214).

At present, although jurisprudentially members of Hezbollah consider themselves imitators of the Supreme Leader, they carry out their tactical affairs internally under the leadership of Sayyed Hassan Nasrollāh. A person who has been able to gain a high position and influence in Lebanon by imitating the personality of Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership and revive the location of the Supreme Leader inside Lebanon. The Lebanese people now know him by several characteristics. First, Skilled and intelligent analysis; with his predictions of the outcome of the 33-day war, he was able to present himself with the image of an aware leadership and insightful political analyst. In a way that, now in Lebanon, his promises are called "Sincere Promise." (Derakhsheh and beigi, 2016:53) second, a person of conversation and negotiation; Hezbollah never killed Israeli prisoners for revenge but used them as a tool to bargain. Behavior that distinguishes this group from some extremist movements in the Arab world and shows its intelligence. Third, Location expert and aware of the developments of the time; in the late 1990s, Hezbollah changed its flag from the Islamic Revolution in Lebanon to Islamic resistance. This change indicated that this group did not have a stagnant ideological approach. All these characteristics and many other personality traits of Sayyed Hassan Nasrollāh have made him a trusted leader for the Lebanese people who can trust and rely on him and the group under his command during difficult days. This trust is the greatest asset and source of soft power for Hezbollah.

2.3. Strengthening the Spiritual Power of Hezbollah Through the Presence of the Clergy at the Heart of the Islamic Resistance

The potency of soft power depends more than anything on its resources. These resources are meager in the mundane world of the West. At the same time, in the age of globalization - which is the source of the power of immaterial factors and mainly rooted in spiritual and religious beliefs- the origins of this insignificant power in the Islamic Revolution and the growing authority of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been manifested

**Understanding the Power of Hezbollah: The Secret to its Victories, and its
Permanence in the Lebanese Political Arena**

118

(Mohammadi, 2010: 104-105). Attention to soft power and its components began with the first guidelines of Ayatollah Khomeini. Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, using the power of the people and relying on the faith of the people and the emergence of new words such as the oppressed, the war between the rich and the poor, the battle between convenience and jihad, it destroyed the old discipline and established a new subject in the contemporary world in which the source of that power is the faith of the masses (Eftekhari, 2008:569). Lebanon's Hezbollah has emulated this aspect of the Islamic Revolution, and by reposting clerics at the center of the resistance they have been responsible for publishing spirituality throughout in the group. So that it can be said that the role of clerics in the various pillars of Hezbollah is unprecedented in any of the Lebanese organizations. An executive council or jihad council has always been run by a cleric, the spokesman, the secretary general and the deputy secretary general of Hezbollah have always been chosen from among the clergy. The unique position of clerics in Hezbollah has led to the group's growing influence among Lebanese Shias, and has become much more widespread among its followers than Sunni Islamist groups. The spread of Shia clerics in Lebanon (compared to the years before the 1980s) is, in fact, one of the influences that Lebanese Shias have received from the Islamic Revolution in Iran (Khashan, 1998: 14) Shia clerics play two important roles in Hezbollah: First, "they establish a connection between the Supreme Leader and his Lebanese followers; and secondly, the protection and preservation of the Islamic nature of Hezbollah, they make religious justifications for Hezbollah's actions and positions, including resistance and the struggle against Israel" (Asadollahi, 2000:181).

In fact, in any conflict, whether military, political, or cultural, the role of leadership and command is essential. The leadership that guides the movement and determines the strategy. It regulates and plans how to deal with the enemy. The relationship between the leadership and the people is significant, and the stronger leadership position among the people, the more legitimate and popular it will be. Due to personal attractions, charismatic leaders have been able to lead the masses to their desired destination for a while. As soon as they leave the scene, they face a leadership vacuum and create a kind of stagnation (Mohammadi, 2009:110). But this has not happened in Lebanon's Hezbollah. Both the former leaders and the current Hezbollah leader have been able to create an excellent charismatic position for themselves and strengthen it day by day. In a way, it can be argued that Hezbollah's current leader, Sayyed

Hassan Nasrollāh, has a high level of spiritual influence and a significant role in strengthening national solidarity and peaceful coexistence among Lebanese sects. This influence and popularity have played an essential role in increasing Hezbollah's soft power, both inside and outside Lebanon. For example, Simone Haddad's quantitative research on 256 Lebanese citizens shows that there is a direct and significant relationship between Hezbollah's popularity and Hezbollah's adherence to religion. However, satisfaction with the government's performance has not been a good indicator of respondents' attitudes toward Hezbollah (Haddad, 2007: 21). The presence of clerics in Hezbollah's central heart and the role played by Sayyed Hassan Nasrollāh in leading the group has certainly been effective in strengthening the religious dimension and paying attention to religious rites.

2.4. Spreading the Culture of Resistance by Relying on the Concepts of Jihad and Martyrdom

Just as in the early days of Islam, Muslims began to identify with their distinction from infidels. In the current situation, the oppressive Shia culture plays the same role in contrast to the Western and American culture. A culture that is connected to the Ashura incident and the uprising of Imam Hussein, so just as the Islamic Revolution of Iran defined its mission to fight arrogance, colonialism, and tyranny. Lebanese Hezbollah, based on the same culture, has stood up to Israel as an aggressor in Islamic lands.

Hezbollah, like other Shias around the world, sees the fight against corruption and oppression as part of its faith and considers the uprising to be a prelude to the promised world revolution. According to this view, the legitimacy of any oppressive ruler is practically in question, and action must be taken to overthrow it. America and Israel are at the forefront of this struggle in the world today. The focal point is that the Islamic Revolution of Iran, as a model for Hezbollah, does not recognize the domination and presence of either. Hezbollah's use of symbols of the Shia religion to convey revolutionary and radical messages is another manifestation of the party's influence on the Islamic Revolution of Iran, despite the linguistic and cultural differences between Iranian and Lebanese society. Israeli sources consider the concepts of jihad and martyrdom in the culture of the people of southern Lebanon to be derived from the words and teachings of Ayatollah Khomeini and the Supreme Leader of Iran, which are increasing day by day (Intelligence and Terrorism Information ..., 2006:11). The use of symbols such as "Ashura," "the Martyrdom of Imam Hussein (a.s.)," "the Wars of the Prophet

**Understanding the Power of Hezbollah: The Secret to its Victories, and its
Permanence in the Lebanese Political Arena**

120

(P.B.U.H.) and Imam Ali (a.s.)," "the Period of the Rule of Imam Ali (a.s.)," "the Appearance of the Promised Mahdi," has enabled Hezbollah to convey messages about jihad, martyrdom, perseverance and enduring hardships and sufferings. Magnus Ranstrop writes that "Hezbollah resorted to symbolic Shia events, especially Ashura, to gain widespread Shia support, inciting Revolutionary passion for fighting tyranny, deprivation, and social injustice." This sect used Shia symbolic events as a political weapon to expose the deprivation and injustice perpetrated by the Lebanese tribal system against Shias in the country (Asadollahi, 2003: 188).

In general, the formation of resistance based on Shia symbols has had a positive effect on Lebanese Shias, giving them a sense of pride and superiority over the Israelis. While the states of the region have already accepted this logic due to the defeat of Israel, that they have no choice but to surrender to the will of the United States and Israel and should not be resisted, but this thinking was practically called into question by the victories of Hezbollah in Lebanon. Hezbollah owes all this to the Iranian revolution. According to Sayyed Hassan Nasrollāh, "The culture of the Islamic Revolution of Iran taught the Lebanese Shias that they must continue to resist the enemies until they achieve victory" (Nasrollāh,2007).

Currently, cultural concepts such as jihad, martyrdom, waiting for a savior rooted in Islamic teachings, and even influencing domestic politics and even world politics are particularly prominent in Hezbollah's political decisions and behaviors. Sheikh Naeem Qasim, one of the leaders of Hezbollah, explains the concept of martyrdom by using Shia symbolism: "The historical concept of martyrdom is derived from the historical event of Karbala. This concept includes sacrifice, self-sacrifice, and a deep connection with the Husseini concept of Islam. Thus, the new meaning of Islamic resistance in southern Lebanon stemmed from a belief that encouraged jihad and martyrdom" (Al-Safir Newspaper, 5 May 1984).

The Allameh Fazlollah also states in this regard: "Operational martyrdom is permissible only if the enemy can be shaken. A believer cannot kill himself; unless the results obtained are equivalent to or greater than this sacrifice. Martyrdom operations are not accidental deaths but are obligatory religious cases that are subject to Islamic law, and believers cannot break God's laws" (Al-Nahar Newspaper, 4 October 1995).

In general, the Islamic Resistance of Lebanon, relying on the culture of jihad and martyrdom, has been able to achieve several important goals: First, the spread of the culture of resistance and jihad throughout the region in a way, the Houthis of Yemen now consider Hezbollah, a successful

model for themselves. Second, the expulsion of the Israeli occupiers and other foreign forces from Lebanese land. Third, the transfer of the method of struggle to the Muslims of Palestine, the Syrian people, and other free nations of the world. Fourth, rejecting the model of compromise, diplomacy, and useless negotiations with Israel. Fifth, loosening the myth of Israel's invincibility among Arabs and Muslims. Sixth, establishing popular legitimacy and national solidarity among many Lebanese tribes regarding the resistance against Israel. Seventh, the transformation of Hezbollah from a small Islamic organization in the Lebanese political arena to one of the most important political parties in Lebanon, and an influential actor in the Middle East and the Islamic world (Taheri, 2009:141-142).

2.5. Patience, Perseverance, and Steadfastness in the Face of Adversity

The nature of struggle and confrontation between human beings or human societies is such that any group and faction that spends more time in the path of effort, perseverance, and is not afraid of the enemy's propaganda pressures and psychological warfare and endures the sufferings and hardships of struggle, do not despair and do not back down, will embrace the ultimate victory, and on this basis, God commands the believers to persevere: "So remain on a right course as you have been commanded, [you] and those who have turned back with you [to Allāh], and do not transgress. Indeed, He is seeing of what you do" (Hud: 112).

Since the Islamic Resistance considers itself at the forefront of the fight against Israel, it does not find any kind of retreat, compromise and surrender to the enemy to be permissible or following divine commands and laws, because God has explicitly commanded the believers to resist and persevere. The perseverance and stability of the Islamic Resistance against Israel led the regime to withdraw from the occupied territories of southern Lebanon for the first time in history. Lebanon's Hezbollah has demonstrated its strength and capacity to change the political space in Lebanon and the Middle East by defeating the region's most reliable military regime. Hezbollah's power in this victory did not come from military arms or high technology but was rooted in its faith and stability of perseverance (El-Hokayem, 2007:47).

Hezbollah also taught the patience lessons and resistance that it had learned from the struggles of the Iranian people to the Syrians and Yemenis. They have learned well how and in what circumstances to manage the crisis and enter the field when necessary. Neither Western arms sanctions could undermine Hezbollah's military might, nor could the US-Israeli media war prevent Hezbollah from infiltrating the hearts and

minds of Arab nations. What is happening in Syria today is a sign of Hezbollah's popularity and this group's combat capability, which could defeat ISIS even outside Lebanon's borders. Hezbollah's success in the Qalamoun region and its role in controlling ISIS to enter Lebanese territory and secure its borders have put this group in a position to maintain its military gains through its soft power (Dubin, 2017).

2.6. Courage in the Face of Threats and Preserving Security

Unlike material societies, monotheistic societies - those who do not see life as limited in these few mornings of experience in this world and do not see death as the end of life are considered the beginning of eternal life - they have no fear other than God's wrath, and they strike at the heart of the enemy with courage and bravery. For them, whether they kill or not, both are victories and happiness, and this in itself leads to a power that cannot be countered by any material means. Israel was founded on the fear of its enemies, and in the wars of 1973, 1967, 1956, and 1949, it overcame the Arabs by terrorizing them. But when Hezbollah's self-sacrificing, faithful, and martyrdom-seeking youths overcame their fear of confrontation with the Israelis, they were able to defeat them despite the lack of personnel and War mechanism, and to force them to retreat (Mohammadi, 2010: 110). The victory was achieved as a result of the guidance and leadership of Sayyed Hassan Nasrollāh, as well as Al-Manar TV programs, especially the broadcast of Nasrollāh's impassioned speeches. This victory made the memory of Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon eternal for the Lebanese and was written based on Hezbollah's courage. Therefore, it can be said that “many Lebanese Shias now have an ideological and emotional connection with Hezbollah” (Lob, 2014: 6). And this is the secret of Hezbollah's power and permanence.

In addition to Hezbollah's bravery against Israel, what added to the popularity was the presence of the force in the war against ISIS in Syria. The Lebanese people, who at first expressed their sympathy with the Syrian protesters, over time, watching ISIS's crime videos, including beheadings, mass executions, drowning, and other inhumane tactics, gradually led to the conclusion that this was a foreign conspiracy backed by some regional states. Therefore, they felt threatened, and when Hezbollah went to war with ISIS and managed to keep it away from the Lebanese borders, they considered it the only defense force in the country and supported its presence in the Syrian war.

2.7. The Culture of Fighting and Resistance against the Israeli Regime

With the realization of Zionist ideas in the form of the state of Israel, the issue of Zionism became a problem for Islamic countries, and the need to

deal with this phenomenon and support the struggles of the Palestinian people became an ideal for Islamic nations. The movements and efforts of the Palestinian people were a symbol of the resistance of Muslims against the Israelis, what accelerated and intensified the struggles of the Palestinians was the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini's interpretation of the "Cancer Gland" by Israel and the slogan "Destruction of Israel" posed a severe challenge to the Israelis and accelerated the Palestinian movement. (Mohammadi, 2009: 168) After the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini called the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan in 1979 "Quds Day." And said: "Quds Day is not the day of Palestine, it is the day of Islam; It is the day of the Islamic government" (Khomeini, 1982: 278).

Lebanon's Hezbollah has taken up the flag of the struggle raised by Iran against Israel has taken over the borders of this regime and has now become a worthy model for the liberation movements. Hezbollah's significant victory in various parts of Lebanon helped this movement become known as one of the pillars of political power in Lebanon. A process that has the support of a wide range of people and has won their hearts and minds (Chertoff, 2008:1). This undeniable fact caused Hezbollah to be able to build a secure fence around the resistance and its arms. A barrier formed by a network of extensive connections with the country's primary and powerful forces. This fact gave Hezbollah a chance to act as a match point for all active groups and troops on the Lebanese scene. Hezbollah continued its life in the Lebanese political and social arena, showing incomparable movements, the most important and most significant of which was defending southern Lebanon against the aggression of the occupying Israeli forces, which made everyone admire it. The Lebanese resistance to the 33- day of the 2006 war against the Israeli invasion is a symbol of Hezbollah's soft power among the Lebanese people. Many pro-Israel analysts see this war as the best missed historic opportunity to achieve the regime's goals in the region and support Hezbollah's authority (Amidror, 2007:3). Kali Robinson points to Hezbollah's firing of thousands of missiles into Israel during the 33-day war. He sees that access this group to advanced arms, including anti-ship missiles and Hezbollah anti-tank missiles, as Israel's most important future threat. It is confirmed by Hezbollah's 2009 manifesto, which is also confirmed by the discovery of Hezbollah's underground tunnels into Israeli territory in December 2018 (Robinson, 2020: 2).

2.8. Acting to Serve the People of Deprived and War-torn Areas in Lebanon

One of Hezbollah's sources of power and influence among the Lebanese people is the full range of services that Hezbollah provides to Lebanese citizens. The group has government-independent organizations, including schools, hospitals, and charities, on which livelihoods of thousands of Lebanese people depend on it. Like Iran, Hezbollah was able to create organizations such as the Relief Committee, Constructive Jihad, the Martyr Foundation, the Islamic Health Organization, and charities, etc. And it is responsible for helping the poor and deprived people also the families of the martyrs. These services did not only belong to Shias in southern Lebanon, but also Sunnis and Christian. James B. Love (2017) described such social services as a source of Hezbollah's soft power and an objective example on this, the actions of women volunteers wearing Lebanese Hezbollah flags during the 33-day war as part of Hezbollah's campaign on the southern and bombed suburbs of Beirut. And they provided funds to Shia Muslim families so that they could reorganize their homes and lives. In fact, Hezbollah managed to change the image of this group as a militant and extremist group in the minds of Lebanese and the people of the region in the 1980s to an active political-military group based on jihadist spirit and service to the homeland against foreign aggressors.

What has made these activities even more prominent is the government's inability to serve and integrate the activities of the March 14 group, led by Saad Hariri, through political and administrative corruption. The corruption that sometimes, like the events of the summer of 2019, caused the government to step down. Meanwhile, Sayyed Hassan Nasrollāh is known among the people for his moral, pure biological, and popular qualities. As a popular and divine leader, he not only never wanted anything for himself or his family but donated all his possessions to Islam, his people and his homeland (Mahjoub, 2012: 161). His son's martyrdom in the way of the resistance is a clear symbol of this sincerity. A sincerity that was not hidden from the eyes of the Lebanese people.

2.9. Using Media Abilities for Mental Imagery

One of the problems that Hezbollah, like the Islamic Republic, has faced is the high volume of media programs that are being carried out to destroy its image. To counter this media war, Hezbollah has set up Al-Manar TV, launched a website and appeared in cyberspace, and designed and built a computer and 3D games. Currently, Al-Manar TV and Radio Al-Noor, along with Internet sites and virtual networks, are the most durable Hezbollah information tools in Lebanon. Hezbollah is using this media to

strengthen its organization and leaders, gain a foothold in Lebanese and world public opinion, promote the organization's ideology and strategic goals, lead a psychological war against its enemies, and strengthen the spirit of resistance against Israel (Azani, 2006:61). Systematic planning and organization based on Hezbollah's organizational behavior in Lebanon in support of the network were such that during the Thirty-Three Day War, its plans were not interrupted, and it became a channel to attract audiences to Hezbollah. The blows inflicted on Israel by Al-Manar TV broadcast its various programs and images in the Arab world, the region, and even Europe, according to military and political experts, were no less than the firing of Katyusha missiles into the occupied territories, and this indicates the superiority of soft power over hard power.

Another tool of Hezbollah's information and media in the digital world is its focus on using the capabilities of the digital world to create 3D games with excellent graphics and design. Computer games are another interesting digital tool that Hezbollah has designed and launched to expand and introduce its program. The value of information and communication efficiency of computer games is such that these games add billions of dollars a year to the circulation of e-commerce and even the annual turnover of world trade. The play "Towards Victory," which was launched by Hezbollah's design team a few years ago in a significant circulation in the regional markets, especially in Iran, is an example of this. In this game, Hezbollah presents one of its successful operations against the Israeli positions in the last decades of the twentieth century in the form of a match to the audience. In this game, Israeli war tools are attacked with the help of militant Palestinian youth, and Hezbollah's slogans and ideological thoughts are conveyed to the audience in the form of games and a graphical and multimedia environment. To better understand the importance of these games, it is enough to mention the creation of three games, "Special Forces in the Conquest of Quds," which deals with the war between Muslims and Israel regime. The game was so important that it provoked a lot of external reactions. Israel, for example, has threatened to cut relations with countries that authorize the import and distribution of these cultural products. The proper use of the media, especially by Al-Manar TV, by Hezbollah has made the image of Sayyed Hassan Nasrollāh not only the leader of a Shia group in southern Lebanon, but also the leader of the entire Arab world. The tone of Sayyed Hassan Nasrollāh's transcendental and trans-religious speech, as well as the call for solidarity between the Arab worlds against Israel, also contributed to this process. As a result, in a 2008 poll conducted

Understanding the Power of Hezbollah: The Secret to its Victories, and its Permanence in the Lebanese Political Arena

126

by the Zogby¹ Thought Institute, Sayyed Hassan Nasrollāh was recognized as the hero and most popular leader in the Arab world, and this has increased Hezbollah's position (Toameh, 2008) .

In addition to the above, some political analysts, such as Benjamin Rosenbaum, believe that Hezbollah has been able to increase its soft power by playing the role of "an oppressed hero and Lebanese defender against foreign occupier." The situation does not seem to be weakening, and Hezbollah will continue to strengthen it in southern Lebanon. Thus, in Rosenbaum's view, "weakening Hezbollah's position should be one of the most important components of US policy in the region" (Rosenbaum, 2016).

Conclusion

What has been said most about Hezbollah in Lebanon is its military might and its strength to resist against Israel? However, Hezbollah's successes are not limited to hard power, but this group has been able to identify and strengthen its soft power resources over the past four decades. Most of these resources of soft power are taken from the model of the Islamic revolution in Iran. Correctly, these sources of energy can be identified and calculated in several dimensions. First, the idea of Guardian Jurist (Velayat-e Faqih), in addition to stabilizing the position of Sayyed Hassan Nasrollāh in southern Lebanon as a spiritual leader, has legitimized this group and how it works. Secondly, Sayyed Hassan Nasrollāh has been able to use the Shia ideological power well and introduce a new model in the fight against Israel by resorting to the concepts of jihad and martyrdom. A pattern that, as in the past, is not just nationalistic or sentimental and is based on efficiency. Third, relying on God and the divine providence that has always expressed in the words of Iran's leaders and given hope and motivation to the Lebanese people, and has been reflected in the outcome against Israel. Fourth, Hezbollah's method of struggle is based on popular force and guerrilla warfare. A war that has defeated the Israeli army and forced it to retreat is called the practical meaning of resistance. In this struggle, Israel is no longer facing an army with a specific military strength and numbers, but a mass of people and every house is a stronghold, and every Shia is a soldier. Fifth, the personality traits and leadership style of Sayyed Hassan Nasrollāh regarding the infiltration of hearts and minds are mainly the same as those of Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei.

1. Zogby International public opinion polls.

He has learned well from the school of the Islamic Revolution, were to exercise flexibility and enter into negotiations, and where to stand and fight. These symbols of management and leadership have played an essential role in promoting Hezbollah's soft power. Sixth, in addition to its success on the military level, Hezbollah achieved great success in the field of quiet war and the media. The images presented by Hezbollah and its leadership in the Arab world not only made Sayyed Hassan Nasrollāh the beloved leader of the Arab world but also transferred the model of Islamic resistance to the Lebanese youth and continued it from generation to generation. Seventh, in a situation where the Lebanese government has been unable to provide services for any reason in the last four decades, Hezbollah has been able to stand by deprived and weak Lebanese families. This group's service movement has increased its popularity, especially in families with war-torn areas. Eighth, Hezbollah has been able to send a message to all changes in the region and the Lebanese people that patience, perseverance, and courage can overcome internal problems and foreign enemies. In this way, the group defeated the myth of Israel's invincibility and was able to liberate the occupied territories of Lebanon. Ninth, Hezbollah has been able to turn its military power into political power and is now part of the political structure of power inside Lebanon. Therefore, no political party from inside and outside Lebanon can remove it or demand its disarmament. Accordingly, Hezbollah's soft power has continuously reproduced, and along with its hard power, it has become a factor in this group's popularity. That's why much of the West's efforts to failure Hezbollah's disarmament have aimed at neutralization its soft power in the region. An action to control it requires awareness and maintaining unity and internal cohesion in Lebanon.

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130

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