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Israeli Security Strategies and Hezbollah: The Resilience of Hybrid Actors against Military Superiority

İsrail'in Güvenlik Stratejileri ve Hizbullah: Hibrit Aktörlerin Askerî Üstünlüğe Direnci

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Abstract

This study examines why Israeli conventional security strategies have failed to neutralise Hezbollah, despite Israel's enduring military superiority. Adopting a qualitative case-based approach, it analyses three critical turning points in the Israeli-Hezbollah confrontation: the 1982 invasion, the 2000 withdrawal, and the 2006 war. The analysis demonstrates that deterrence-centred strategies misinterpret the cumulative logic of hybrid power, in which Hezbollah's military, social, and political wings interact to transform coercive pressure into renewed legitimacy. By linking the frameworks of hybrid warfare, asymmetric conflict, and the terror trap, the study finds that Israel's reliance on force reproduction generates governance vacuums and identity mobilisation that strengthen, rather than weaken, hybrid actors. The findings suggest that sustainable security requires calibrated coercion integrated with political inclusion, welfare provision, and narrative competition.

Keywords: Israel, Hezbollah, Hybrid Organisations, Conventional Security Strategies, Asymmetric Warfare

Öz

Bu çalışma, İsrail'in askerî üstünlüğüne rağmen Hizbullah karşısında neden kalıcı bir başarı elde edemediğini incelemektedir. Nitel bir yaklaşım benimseyen araştırma, İsrail-Hizbullah ilişkilerindeki üç dönüm noktasını; 1982 işgali, 2000'deki çekilmesini ve 2006 savaşını, karşılaştırmalı biçimde analiz etmektedir. Bulgular, caydırıcılığa dayalı konvansionel anlamdaki güvenlik anlayışının, hibrit örgütlerin askerî, toplumsal ve siyasal boyutlar arasında kurduğu etkileşimi göz ardı ettiğini göstermektedir. İsrail'in uyguladığı güç kullanımı, meşruiyet kaybı yerine, Hizbullah'ın toplumsal ve siyasal konumunu güçlendiren bir döngü yaratmaktadır. Çalışma, hibrit savaş, asimetrik çatışma ve "terör tuzağı" yaklaşımlarını bir araya getirerek, kalıcı güvenliğin ancak dengeli bir caydırıcılığın siyasî katılım, sosyal refah ve söylemsel rekabetle desteklenmesiyle mümkün olabileceğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İsrail, Hizbullah, Hibrit Örgütler, Konvansiyonel Güvenlik Stratejileri, Asimetrik Savaş

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Introduction

Confronting violent non-state actors is a defining security dilemma of the post-Cold War Middle East. Military superiority rarely produces political success when adversaries draw power from legitimacy, endurance, and narrative control. The Israeli-Hezbollah confrontation exemplifies this paradox: despite Israel's overwhelming advantage, Hezbollah has expanded its influence, governance capacity and symbolic authority. This raises the central question: Why have Israeli conventional security measures failed to neutralise Hezbollah, and how have they contributed to its consolidation as a hybrid actor?

The article contends that Israel's approach, rooted in deterrence, pre-emption, and punitive retaliation, has repeatedly and inadvertently strengthened Hezbollah's organisational power. Focusing almost exclusively on the military dimension ignored the political and social infrastructures that make Hezbollah resilient, producing a cycle in which each effort to degrade capabilities deepened legitimacy. Drawing on Ganor's (2012) concept of hybrid organisations, the argument shows how Hezbollah's military, social, and political wings operate as substitutable complements; deterrence alone cannot defeat a movement whose authority rests as much on governance and moral narrative as on force.

Existing work on Israeli security strategies Examine deterrence, targeted killing, and proportionality but pays less attention to the feedback effects of coercion on adversary consolidation. By tracing policies from 1982 to 2006, this study situates the case within asymmetric conflict and the terror trap (Simon, 2001), showing how military success can erode a state's security narrative when suffering is converted into legitimacy. This study, therefore, makes a deliberate scope choice. It examines how Israeli coercive strategies interacted with Hezbollah's hybrid architecture across three turning points (1982, 2000, and 2006). Later developments, including Hezbollah's regional role after 2011 and the broader regional escalation after 2023, involve different causal pathways and evidence requirements. They are, thus, not treated as additional empirical chapters here and are instead flagged as avenues for future research. Analytically, the article demonstrates that confronting hybrid organisations requires strategic inversion—combining calibrated coercion with political inclusion and social competition to marginalise, rather than annihilate, the adversary. The next section outlines the analytical framework and case selection; subsequent sections trace Hezbollah's evolution and assess Israel's measures, culminating in an analysis of 2006; the conclusion distils broader implications for countering hybrid organisations.

1. Analytical Framework and Case Selection

This article employs a qualitative, case-based analytical framework combining process-oriented reasoning with theoretically informed interpretation. Rather than seeking statistical generalisation, it traces how Israeli conventional security measures interacted with Hezbollah's hybrid organisational structure across three critical junctures: the 1982 invasion, the 2000 unilateral withdrawal, and the 2006 Lebanon War. These moments were selected because each redefined the strategic environment and revealed how coercion can inadvertently generate legitimacy for hybrid non-state actors.

The framework rests on two premises. First, hybrid organisations that act simultaneously as militant, social, and political entities derive resilience from the interaction between these domains rather than from any single source of power. Second, deterrence-based conventional security strategies often trigger adaptive consolidation: by harming civilian constituencies or weakening state institutions, coercive measures reinforce the very grievances and dependencies that sustain hybrid legitimacy. The goal is, thus, to uncover a

pathway through which military coercion evolves into political and social empowerment for the adversary.

Conceptually, the analysis draws on Ganor's (2012) model of hybrid organisations, Arreguin-Toft's (2005) theory of asymmetric conflict, and Simon's (2001) notion of the terror trap. Together, they clarify why material superiority often fails against hybrid actors: coercion and legitimacy form a recursive cycle in which attempts to suppress violence can strengthen it.

Building on this foundation, classical and contemporary scholarship elucidates the mechanisms linking violence, governance, and legitimacy. Kalyvas (2006, pp. 55-94) and Staniland (2018, pp. 110-118) demonstrate that control and embeddedness determine whether violence subdues or sustains rebellion. Mampilly (2012, pp. 31-48) and Cammett (2014, pp. 13-14) show that insurgent rulers acquire output legitimacy by providing order and welfare where the state cannot. Such findings explain why coercive action against the social infrastructures of hybrid actors may deepen, rather than diminish, their authority.

Empirical work on the backlash effects of violence reinforces this logic. Lyall (2009) and Shapiro (2013, pp. 74-91) find that repression can make militant organisations more disciplined and service-oriented, converting coercion into legitimacy investment. Religious cohesion further stabilises this dynamic: Berman and Laitin (2008, pp. 1942-1945) demonstrate how club goods transform costly commitment into social capital, rendering welfare-oriented movements like Hezbollah resilient to dismantlement.

The politics of adaptation and alliance also sustain hybrid endurance. Christia (2012, pp. 8-13) shows that insurgent actors survive not via battlefield victory but through coalition-building, negotiation, and transformation into formal politics. Similarly, Crenshaw (2014, pp. 556-559) and Kilcullen (2011, pp. 73-75) warn that excessive retaliation produces accidental guerrillas that radicalise local populations while undermining state legitimacy. Broader comparative studies (Weinstein, 2008, pp. 17-22) confirm that groups that rely on domestic consent govern more responsibly than those that are supported by external patronage—a pattern seen in Hezbollah, whose Iranian-backed military wing is offset by locally legitimised social and political networks.

Although this extensive literature has advanced understanding of insurgent persistence, it seldom connects the micro-level mechanisms of rebel governance with the macro-level dynamics of state coercion. The result is a fragmented picture: the resilience of hybrid organisations is well documented, yet the recursive interaction between state action and organisational adaptation remains understudied. The Israeli-Hezbollah confrontation exemplifies this gap, as military, political, and social logics continually intersect to reproduce mutual dependency and insecurity.

By tracing this relationship, the article moves beyond existing debates on insurgent governance to reveal how coercion and legitimacy function as interdependent processes. While factors such as Israeli domestic politics, regional power interventions, or Lebanon's confessional bargaining shaped the broader context, they cannot explain the persistence of similar outcomes across decades. The explanatory key lies in the structural logic of hybrid warfare itself: coercion that paradoxically generates legitimacy.

Empirically, the article traces this logic through a deliberately bounded case design, centred on three turning points in the Israeli-Hezbollah confrontation. The 1982 invasion is treated as the formative juncture because it captures the emergence of Hezbollah and

the early conversion of coercive pressure into social embeddedness and legitimacy claims under conditions of state weakness. The 2000 unilateral withdrawal is selected because it institutionalised a victory narrative that consolidated Hezbollah's hybrid position across its military, social, and political arenas. The 2006 Lebanon War then serves as the most demanding test of the argument, illustrating the limits of deterrence-centred coercion against a mature hybrid actor and clarifying why battlefield dominance did not translate into strategic political outcomes. Taken together, these junctures provide sufficient leverage to follow the interaction between coercion and legitimacy across time, while keeping the analysis conceptually coherent. Post-2006 developments, particularly Hezbollah's regional role after 2011 and the escalation dynamics since October 2023, require a different evidentiary base and therefore fall outside the scope of this article. These later episodes are referenced only in the discussion to illustrate how the article's core mechanism may leave traces beyond the 1982-2006 period, rather than to extend the empirical analysis.

This framing enables a layered reading of the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict, treating confrontation not as isolated operations but as a sustained interaction linking coercion, identity, and governance. It reveals how militarily superior states can reproduce the insecurities they seek to eliminate and how weaker hybrid actors transform state power into their own source of endurance.

2. Hezbollah's Evolution, Ideology, and Organisational Multiplexity

Whether a violent non-state actor is described as a terrorist or liberationist depends less on its intrinsic nature than on vantage point, audience, and the politics of naming. This label often collapses complex causes into a moral verdict, which obscures how grievance, exclusion, and insecurity drive mobilisation. Analytically, terrorism is best treated not as identity but as a tactic: a method through which weaker actors raise the costs of domination and corrode their adversary's moral authority. This perspective is especially pertinent in fragile states where governments fail to provide security and welfare. As Baylouny (2010, p. 137) underlines, such environments create functional holes that violent non-state actors fill by supplying protection and basic services, which, in turn, transforms dependency into political loyalty and tactical violence into order-making.

Ganor's (2012, pp. 13-16) model of hybrid organisation captures this logic of organisational multiplexity. Hybrid actors operate through three interlinked wings: military, social, and political wings, whose interplay yields resilience greater than the sum of its parts. The military wing uses violence as a tool to impose costs and signal resolve; the social wing provides welfare and reconstruction, which generates output legitimacy; and the political wing turns this embeddedness into representation and policy leverage, which confers the group input legitimacy. Because these wings compensate for each other, countermeasures focused solely on kinetic suppression are prone to backfire: degrading battlefield capacity may deepen popular identification if civilians experience collective harm or loss of livelihood.

Hezbollah exemplifies this architecture. Its social wing, or *da'wa* (religious outreach and social welfare network), evolved from charity into a dense welfare ecosystem that included schools, clinics, and reconstruction offices, initially serving Shia communities but later extending to mixed constituencies (Azani, 2013, pp. 899-916; Haddad, 2006, pp. 21-34). Beyond alleviating poverty, these institutions normalised everyday interactions with the movement, creating administrative pathways and expectations of responsiveness typically associated with statehood. Welfare thus functioned as governance: it authorised Hezbollah to adjudicate disputes, allocate resources, and discipline local actors, projecting competence

that Lebanon's weakened state could not match. Welfare was not merely distributive but performative, staging the movement as a guarantor of dignity amid collapse.

Hezbollah's military wing must be read within this governance landscape. Its doctrine of *muqāwama* (resistance) fuses religious obligation with community defence, portraying armed struggle as a collective duty rooted in lived experiences of insecurity (Alagha, 2011, pp. 31-58). The 1985 Open Letter envisioned mobilisation as a societal project in which the boundary between civilians and combatants blurred—less to erase legal distinctions than to elevate participation as a communal virtue (Alagha, 2011, pp. 31-58). Tactically, this approach translated into dispersed command structures and calibrated escalation designed to impose uncertainty on a superior adversary. Analytically, the military wing is more than force: it is a narrative mechanism that frames sacrifice as meaning, explaining why coercive counter-strategies often misread the political elasticity of violence in communities where insecurity is chronic.

The political wing, emerging later, completed the hybrid whole. Initially bound to *wilāyat al-faqīh* (guardianship of the Islamic jurist) and suspicious of Lebanon's confessional order (Alagha, 2011, pp. 31-58), Hezbollah recalibrated in the 1990s. The post-Gulf War environment and sanctions on Iran encouraged a pragmatic reduction of revolutionary rhetoric (Byman, 2007, p. 122). Domestically, the *Ta'if Agreement* reopened institutions while preserving contradictions, allowing Hezbollah to retain its resistance role yet enter formal politics. Its success in the 1992 elections, winning eight parliamentary seats, marked a strategic tone: integration without disarmament. It was not ideological surrender but rather what can be called *Lebanonisation*—an adaptation of discourse, finance, and operations to a multi-confessional order. Parliamentary participation conferred procedural legitimacy and access to state resources, while governmental roles institutionalised Hezbollah's brokering between local constituencies and state agencies, insulating it from unilateral coercion.

Viewed through this tripartite lens, Hezbollah's evolution can be read as a chain of resource conversions. External sponsorship, notably from Iran, provided ideological and material capital that was converted into welfare capacity, then political capital, and finally back into coercive capability through taxation-like revenues and recruitment. Each conversion stage was reinforced by narratives linking resistance to dignity, welfare to justice, and politics to sovereignty. The organisation's centre of gravity, thus, lies not in a single asset but in a relational ecology of dependencies, moral narratives, and institutional footholds that sustain mobilisation even under duress.

This ecology clarifies why repression so often misfires. When coercion is experienced as collective punishment, whether through displacement or the destruction of infrastructure, it revalidates Hezbollah's claim to protection and strengthens the very social contracts that strategy seeks to rupture. The logic is recursive: intensified pressure heightens demand for welfare and security; greater demand expands the social wing's reach; expanded reach amplifies political leverage; and enhanced leverage cushions the military wing through improved logistics and recruitment. In effect, the wings function as substitutable complements: undermining one without addressing the others shifts the organisational load rather than collapsing it.

Hezbollah's discursive adaptability has been equally decisive. In the 1980s, it embraced a transnational revolutionary idiom tied to Iranian clerical authority, but by the mid-1990s, it reframed its rhetoric around Lebanese nationalism and the bounded legitimacy of resistance. This shift mitigated domestic polarisation without severing Iranian ties. The

Intifaḍ (opening-up) policy expanded alliances, media outreach, and civic engagement consistent with hybrid logic. These adaptations did not dilute the movement's security role; they normalised it. *Lebanonisation* thus functioned less as an ideological transformation than as risk management within a system that rewards flexibility and punishes purism.

Institutional developments following the *Ta'if Agreement* consolidated this hybrid model. While the accord demilitarised most factions, it preserved an exception for resistance activities, enabling Hezbollah to retain arms while broadening its civic footprint. Israel's withdrawal in 2000, interpreted domestically as a victory, transformed endurance into symbolic capital. Withdrawal relegitimised the military wing under a new deterrence narrative, while the social and political wings consolidated the dividends of success.

Two theoretical implications follow. First, hybrid organisations are resilience-maximisers—shocks in one domain redistribute strength across others. Second, their legitimacy is multi-source and path-dependent, grounded in welfare provision, procedural inclusion, and security, and sedimented through narratives that translate these outputs into collective meaning. Counter-strategies that ignore this architecture risk reproducing the very conditions sustaining it. The military wing may be the most visible target, yet the organisation's durability is anchored in the co-evolution of all three wings. Thus, deterrence signalling, punitive raids, and decapitation attempts struggle to yield strategic outcomes unless paired with credible governance alternatives.

In essence, Hezbollah's evolution shows how violent non-state actors can transform insecurity and weak governance into lasting systems of power. By turning coercion into protection, welfare into loyalty, and politics into endurance, such groups build self-sustaining structures that continue to function even under pressure. This interconnected system, rather than any single capability, is what ultimately secures their survival and legitimacy. Understanding how such a hybrid architecture took root requires returning to the historical and structural conditions of Hezbollah's formation, where the interactions of occupation, sectarian inequality, and regional upheaval first forged the organisational logic that persists today.

3. Hezbollah's Formation and the Historical Roots of Its Hybrid Power

Hezbollah's evolution from a marginal Shia resistance group to a hybrid political-military actor is inseparable from the conditions of its birth. During Lebanon's civil war and early 1980s regional shifts, state collapse, external intervention, and sectarian fragmentation converged to create both necessity and opportunity for mobilisation.

Hezbollah's emergence in the early 1980s was closely tied to the Lebanese civil war and Israel's 1982 invasion. The Shia community, historically marginalised and impoverished, became fertile ground for mobilisation amid state collapse and foreign intervention. The movement originated as an offshoot of the *Amal* Movement[1] and was led by figures such as Hasan Nasrallah and Hussein al-Musawi, who rejected *Amal*'s secular reformism in favour of an Islamic revolutionary model inspired by post-1979 Iran (Alagha 2011, p. 42).

By the late 1970s, the Lebanese state had withered: Authority eroded, inequality widened, and traditional elites monopolised representation (Norton, 2007, p. 475). Shia communities in the south and Beirut's suburbs faced material deprivation and marginalisation. Israel's 1982 campaign against the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) devastated these areas, and the state could not protect or rebuild (Norton 2007, p. 476). Amal's moderation

looked ineffectual; a younger clerical-militant cohort argued that only a revolutionary Islamic vanguard could achieve justice and expel the occupier (Alagha, 2011, p. 42).

Israel's military campaign was initially directed at dismantling the infrastructure of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation in Lebanon but inadvertently created a vacuum within Shia society. Southern villages and Beirut's southern suburbs suffered widespread destruction, while the state was incapable of offering protection or reconstruction (Norton, 2007, p. 476). This environment of abandonment accelerated the radicalisation of Shia politics. *Amal*'s decision to distance itself from the Palestinian cause—accusing the PLO of inviting further Israeli retaliation—undermined its legitimacy. Into this void stepped a coalition of clerical students, preachers, and militants who coalesced into what would become Hezbollah. Their argument was clear: only an Islamic revolutionary vanguard, grounded in divine authority and armed resistance, could achieve justice for the Shias and expel the occupier (Norton, 2007, pp. 476-477).

Regional dynamics accelerated this turn. The 1979 Iranian Revolution modelled an Islamist overthrow; during the Iran-Iraq War, Tehran exported its message. Through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), trainers, clerics and funds reached Bekaa, building Hezbollah's early infrastructure (Selbin, 2009, p. 38). Hezbollah's relationship with Iran has therefore been more complex than simple patronage. Byman (2007, p. 174) accurately describes it as a sustained partnership in state-sponsored militancy through which Tehran projected influence while Hezbollah gained resources and doctrinal clarity. Yet the organisation's dependence on Iran did not preclude the development of a distinctly Lebanese identity. Hezbollah's leadership consciously linked Islamic universalism to local nationalism, framing resistance as both a divine duty and a patriotic necessity. This dual narrative, both religious and national, became the foundation of its legitimacy. In its 1985 *Open Letter*, Hezbollah articulated unconditional loyalty to Khomeini while simultaneously asserting that its struggle was aimed at defending Lebanon's sovereignty and cleansing its politics of corruption and foreign domination (Byman, 2007, p. 174).

Meanwhile, collapsed governance in South Lebanon created voids that non-state actors could fill. With Iranian funding and mentorship, Hezbollah built schools, clinics, and reconstruction offices that became indispensable locally (Byman, 2007, p. 175). These were not mere charities but mechanisms of social capital and parallel governance, signalling that Islamic resistance could deliver what the state could not.

As a result, Hezbollah evolved from a small clandestine militia into a multifaceted organisation that blurred the distinction between a resistance movement, a political actor, and a welfare institution. Israel's continuing presence in Lebanon after 1982 inadvertently consolidated this trajectory. The occupation functioned as a perpetual legitimising force, allowing Hezbollah to sustain mobilisation under the banner of defence and dignity. By the late 1980s, the group had outgrown its initial confines: it was simultaneously a Lebanese political actor, a regional emblem of anti-imperialist defiance, and a model for other Islamist movements seeking to reconcile revolutionary zeal with local legitimacy.

This transformation was also discursive. As pan-Arab nationalism declined following Egypt's peace with Israel and the fragmentation of the Arab front, Hezbollah's rhetoric of Islamic resistance filled the ideological vacuum. It claimed to speak for the oppressed across confessional and national lines, aligning its struggle with both Palestinian liberation and broader Muslim solidarity. This framing resonated deeply in a region disillusioned by the failures of secular and nationalist regimes. Hezbollah's appeal, therefore, did not rest solely

on its military prowess but on its ability to integrate three mutually reinforcing dimensions: religious ideology, which supplied moral legitimacy; political grievance, which articulated the cause of the marginalised; and social service, which materialised its promises in everyday life. Together, these dimensions formed the early blueprint of a hybrid organisational structure—one whose strength derived not from battlefield victories alone but from its embeddedness within society.

By the end of the 1980s, Hezbollah had thus consolidated the essential components that would define its subsequent evolution: an external alliance providing resources and ideology; a domestic base anchored in welfare and identity; and a narrative that intertwined faith, nationalism, and resistance. This multidimensional foundation later made the organisation remarkably resilient to conventional military strategies, enabling it to absorb shocks, adapt to political change, and project an image of legitimacy even amid sustained confrontation.

These early patterns of hybrid consolidation would directly shape the trajectory of Israeli conventional security strategies. The next section traces how successive Israeli strategies, ranging from occupation to withdrawal to full-scale war, interacted with Hezbollah's evolving architecture, exposing the paradoxes of asymmetric confrontation.

4. Israeli Conventional Security Strategies and the Paradoxes of Asymmetric Warfare

The 1982 invasion reshaped both Hezbollah's and Israel's confronting strategies. A campaign to uproot the PLO generated a more resilient, locally embedded adversary. Israel's security belt kept troops in the south until 2000; daily occupation, as Byman (2011, p. 51) notes, consolidated Hezbollah's authority. Israeli leaders long underestimated the group as a mere Iranian proxy (Byman, 2011, p. 52). By the mid-1990s, Hezbollah had expanded militarily and socially; limited Israeli reprisals reinforced its framing as Lebanon's effective defender, setting conditions for a post-withdrawal hybrid consolidation.

As Rabinovich notes (2013, pp. 1-27), Israel's political and military leadership underestimated Hezbollah's capacity throughout the 1980s, perceiving it as an extension of Iranian influence rather than a domestic Lebanese force with its own adaptive logic. By the mid-1990s, this underestimation proved costly. Hezbollah had already expanded its military capabilities, enhanced its social institutions, and acquired significant political traction within Lebanon's confessional order. When Israel finally recognised the depth of the challenge, it initiated a limited yet enduring conflict that consisted of repeated bombardments and reprisal attacks intended to impose costs on Hezbollah while avoiding full-scale war. However, this reactive posture merely reinforced the group's legitimacy. The pattern of occupation and reprisal allowed Hezbollah to frame itself not as a hybrid organisation but as Lebanon's sole effective defender. By the time Israel withdrew in 2000, the organisation had succeeded in embedding itself as a political-military movement and a social welfare network intertwined with the lives of ordinary Lebanese citizens.

The withdrawal of 2000 became one of the most symbolically consequential moments in the modern Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel intended it as a tactical redeployment; Hezbollah celebrated it as divine vindication. The movement's media framing cast Israel's 2000 withdrawal as the first Arab victory over Israel, transforming a strategic retreat into a myth of triumph (Norton, 2007, p. 479). For Israel, the withdrawal was largely driven by domestic and international exhaustion: after eighteen years of attrition warfare, the cost in lives and reputation had become untenable. Nearly 70% of Israeli citizens supported the unilateral withdrawal, believing that the removal of Israeli troops would strip Hezbollah of its *raison d'être* (Byman, 2011a, p. 918). Yet, this assumption rested on a profound misreading of the

hybrid nature of the organisation. The departure did not erode Hezbollah's legitimacy; it amplified it. Hezbollah's governance structures rapidly filled the vacuum left by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) in southern Lebanon, where Hezbollah now operates unchallenged. Schools, hospitals, and security patrols replaced military checkpoints. Far from disbanding, Hezbollah converted the experience of resistance into political capital, entering the Lebanese Parliament and acquiring the language of sovereignty.

Israel's continued emphasis on deterrence remained unchanged despite this failure. Following withdrawal, Israeli officials vowed to respond to any renewed provocation with overwhelming retaliation (Harel & Issacharoff, 2008, p. 211). A logic akin to deterrence through devastation, as hinted in Harel and Issacharoff (2008, p. 211), was supposed to signal both capability and resolve. Yet the persistence of Hezbollah's cross-border attacks and rocket fire illustrated the limits of such logic. For Hezbollah, provocation was not an error but a deliberate strategy designed to keep Israel reactive and to validate its own existence. Meanwhile, within Israel, the legacy of withdrawal generated what analysts termed the Lebanon Syndrome—a crisis of confidence in deterrence and a collective anxiety about military credibility (Hazran, 2023, p. 35). Six years later, Israel's effort to restore its image of deterrent strength culminated in the 2006 Lebanon War, which revealed the limits of short-term and militarised confronting strategy despite the country's overwhelming military advantage.

However, asymmetric conflict theory clarifies why Israel's model faltered. Weaker actors prevail by shifting contests to moral-political terrain (Arreguin-Toft, 2005, pp. 22-24). Terrorism functions as strategic communication that invites overreaction; disproportionate retaliation confirms the narrative of victimhood described by Simon (2001, pp. 18-20) as the terror trap.

Within this dynamic, terrorism operates as a deliberate method of strategic communication—a language of weakness that turns vulnerability into leverage. By targeting civilians, symbols, and soft infrastructure, the weaker side undermines the state's monopoly on legitimate violence and forces it into overreaction. Simon (2001, pp. 18-20) conceptualises this recursive process as the terror trap. When the state retaliates disproportionately, driven by public anger and political pressure, it reinforces the hybrid organisation's narrative of victimhood and oppression. The ethical distinction between state and non-state violence collapses, transforming every act of retaliation into further proof of state illegitimacy. In this sense, violence begets legitimacy for the insurgent. Simon's (2001, p. 21) analysis is particularly well-suited to the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict: the more Israel sought to deter through coercion, the more it legitimised Hezbollah's claim to be Lebanon's guardian against aggression.

Hybrid organisations, like Hezbollah, exploit this trap to its fullest extent. The asymmetry is not merely military but ontological. The state, constrained by international norms and domestic expectations, must act within moral boundaries; the non-state actor, unbound by such norms, weaponises the state's own ethical constraints. Through calculated provocation, such as firing rockets from civilian areas, placing arsenals near schools and hospitals, or using human shields, Hezbollah forced Israel into moral dilemmas that it could not easily resolve. Each Israeli strike that resulted in civilian casualties served to undermine the legitimacy of Israeli self-defence and strengthen Hezbollah's narrative of resistance. Thus, even military losses became political victories.

Against this backdrop, the organisational logic of Israel's security strategy becomes salient: In the absence of a codified doctrine, responses were shaped less by a legitimacy-

sensitive strategy than by a managerial ethos of risk containment and deterrent signalling. Israel's security strategy architecture prior to 2014 had a guiding ethos but lacked a codified doctrine. As Freilich (2015, p. 360) notes, Israeli security thinking was premised on two assumptions: that terrorism could never be entirely eradicated and that its consequences could only be managed. This realism fostered a paradoxical blend of restraint and aggression. The state sought to maintain an image of deterrence through overwhelming retaliation while avoiding prolonged entanglement. The emphasis lay on pre-emption and prevention, not reconciliation or transformation. Pre-emptive strikes, targeted assassinations, and retaliatory bombings formed the pillars of a pragmatic but inherently short-term strategy (Catignani, 2008, p. 77; Jones & Milton-Edwards, 2013, p. 401).

This approach offered flexibility to policymakers, sparing them the constraints of formal doctrine or long-term commitments. However, it also produced a chronic strategic deficit. By treating terrorism as a perpetual but containable nuisance, Israel substituted deterrence for policy. As Freilich (2015, p. 361) observes, such measures occasionally yielded temporary calm but failed to address the sources of hostility. Deterrence, in practice, became cyclical: each operation created conditions for the next. Moreover, any political settlement with groups like Hezbollah was considered an existential compromise. Recognition of Hezbollah as a legitimate actor would contradict Israel's self-conception as a state that does not negotiate with terrorists. Consequently, the absence of a long-term strategy became a strategic posture in itself, one that inadvertently served the adversary's interests.

Hoffman (2014, p. 464) stresses that conventional force alone cannot neutralise hybrid threats. These hybrid threads require multidimensional engagement, combining political, social, and psychological efforts that integrate military deterrence with initiatives to undermine the opponent's legitimacy among its supporters. Yet, kinetic logic continued to dominate Israel's security strategy paradigm. By focusing narrowly on immediate deterrence, Israel neglected the cumulative processes through which Hezbollah embedded itself within Lebanese society. In essence, Israeli policy fought symptoms instead of causes, seeking short-term dominance rather than durable security.

The 2006 Lebanon War epitomised the limitations of this deterrence-centric framework. On 12 July 2006, Hezbollah captured two Israeli soldiers in a cross-border raid, an act intended to provoke exactly the kind of overreaction that followed (Kreps, 2007). Israel responded with a full-scale campaign intended to restore deterrence and re-engineer the strategic environment of the north. The government adopted what was termed a "victory from the air" strategy, relying predominantly on aerial bombardment to suppress Hezbollah while minimising IDF casualties (Kreps, 2007). Nevertheless, the reliance on airpower proved disastrous. Hezbollah's decentralised command structure, fortified tunnels, and dispersal among civilian populations rendered precision targeting ineffective. As bombing intensified, civilian casualties mounted, producing images that galvanised international condemnation and domestic unease in Israel.

Hezbollah's tactic of embedding military assets in populated areas was not merely defensive; it was designed to force Israel into the moral quagmire of the terror trap. Each civilian death reinforced Hezbollah's narrative that Israel was an indiscriminate aggressor. Despite enormous firepower, Israel failed to cripple Hezbollah's command or stop its rocket attacks. The longer the Israeli campaign lasted, the more it appeared that a highly sophisticated military was being outmanoeuvred by a non-state actor operating from within a devastated society. Within Israel, public criticism surged as casualty counts rose, and

confidence in military leadership waned. Expected to demonstrate strength, the war instead revealed vulnerability.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert stated that *"Lebanon is responsible, and Lebanon will bear the consequences"* (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006), reflecting the shift from targeted deterrence to collective punishment. The destruction of the Dahiyeh district, Hezbollah's stronghold in southern Beirut, became symbolic of this approach. Entire neighbourhoods, bridges, and roads were levelled to impose a strategic lesson. After the conflict, this policy was formalised in the *Dahiyeh Doctrine,* a strategy premised on overwhelming retaliation against any area used by Hezbollah, irrespective of civilian presence (Byman, 2011a, p. 919). However, such destruction merely intensified Lebanese hostility and validated Hezbollah's *raison d'être*. For many Lebanese, the war confirmed that Hezbollah, despite its provocation, was the only actor capable of defending the country.

In operational terms, the war lasted 34 days, but its consequences were enduring. Guerrilla adaptability neutralised the IDF's technological superiority. Hezbollah mined key routes, staged ambushes, and forced Israeli forces into predictable movements. The organisation's use of psychological warfare, including the live broadcasting of attacks, constant communication with its supporters, and Nasrallah's confident televised speeches, amplified the perception of parity (Haddad, 2006, p. 22). Although Israel inflicted significant infrastructural damage, it failed to achieve its objectives: the captured soldiers were not rescued, Hezbollah's rocket capacity remained largely intact, and the group's popularity soared. As Haddad (2006, p. 23) notes, Hezbollah emerged from the conflict having established a balance of terror with Israel, a form of mutual deterrence rooted not in equal strength but in symbolic equivalence.

The post-war period revealed the multidimensional success of Hezbollah's hybrid strategy. Politically, the conflict united previously fragmented Lebanese factions under a shared sense of resistance. Groups that had earlier condemned Hezbollah's militarism now praised its defiance of Israeli aggression (Byman, 2011a, p. 920). The war transformed Hassan Nasrallah from a sectarian leader into a national icon. Socially, Hezbollah's vast welfare network mobilised immediately after the ceasefire to rebuild homes, distribute financial compensation, and restore essential services (Byman, 2011a, p. 920). The rapid reconstruction of infrastructure, particularly hospitals and schools, stood in sharp contrast to the Lebanese state's slow response, further legitimising Hezbollah as a *de facto* government. Militarily, survival itself constituted victory. Despite substantial losses, Hezbollah retained its command structure and demonstrated its capacity to endure an assault by one of the world's most advanced militaries.

Hoffman (2014, p. 465) argues that this outcome illustrates a core paradox of asymmetric warfare: the stronger side's moral and political constraints can nullify its material advantages. Israel, bound by its liberal democratic image and adherence to the Geneva Conventions, sought to wage war within internationally acceptable limits. Hezbollah, operating outside these constraints, turned every instance of Israeli compliance and violation into propaganda. The more Israel tried to assert control through force, the more it destabilised its own ontological security: its self-perception as both morally superior and militarily invincible. The 2006 war thus generated a crisis not only of deterrence but of identity.

From a structural perspective, the war strengthened all three wings of Hezbollah's hybrid organisation. The political wing gained legitimacy as the embodiment of national resistance. The social wing expanded its reach through reconstruction efforts, transforming

the ruins of war into symbols of resilience. The military wing preserved operational integrity, rearming rapidly, and demonstrating the viability of sustained deterrence. In contrast, Israel's security strategy framework remained trapped in a cycle of reaction and overreaction, unable to generate a political strategy commensurate with its military power. Ultimately, the 2006 Lebanon War validated the core thesis of asymmetric conflict theory: in wars between the strong and the weak, power without strategy becomes weakness. Israel's reliance on short-term deterrence and punitive operations undermined its strategic objectives, bolstering the very adversary it sought to destroy. Hezbollah's hybrid model, an intricate fusion of military endurance, social provision, and political legitimacy, proved resistant to conventional strategy. Each bomb, each raid, and each televised strike fed the narrative of divine resistance. For Israel, the outcome was more than a tactical failure; it was an ontological rupture, a moment when the state confronted the limits of its power and the fragility of its security narrative.

The lessons of the 2006 Lebanon War thus extend beyond a single episode of miscalculated deterrence. They reveal the structural impasse that arises when a state confronts a hybrid adversary with conventional assumptions of warfare. Therefore, Israel's experience with Hezbollah demonstrates that kinetic dominance and technological sophistication cannot secure victory against an organisation whose legitimacy, identity, and endurance are socially embedded. As long as countering strategy remains confined to the logic of punishment and moral superiority, it risks perpetuating the very insecurities it seeks to resolve. Therefore, the challenge is not only operational but also conceptual: it requires a reevaluation of how states engage with hybrid actors that blur the boundaries between combatants and civilians, coercion and governance, and resistance and politics. The following section addresses this dilemma by examining how a state can effectively marginalise, rather than merely defeat, a hybrid organisation like Hezbollah and what kind of long-term and multidimensional strategy such an approach would require.

5. Policy Implications: Containing and Delegitimising Hybrid Actors

The regional status quo has long favoured Israel's strategic interests. Militarily dominant and economically superior, Israel has maintained relative security within a volatile regional environment. Albeit, paradoxically, this very dominance has fostered a complacent security culture, one heavily reliant on short-term deterrence and reactive security strategy. Such an approach conceals rather than confronts the structural and ideological roots of insecurity. In the context of asymmetric and hybrid warfare, where the adversary derives power from social legitimacy, political embeddedness, and moral resonance rather than from conventional military capacity, material superiority alone cannot guarantee security. The central challenge, therefore, is not simply how to defeat a hybrid organisation but how to marginalise it—how to erode its legitimacy, disrupt its social base, and neutralise its political appeal. This distinction is particularly critical when confronting hybrid actors, such as Hezbollah, whose endurance depends on multiple and overlapping centres of gravity.

Hybrid organisations differ from conventional insurgencies in that they operate simultaneously across social, political, and military domains. Each of these spheres provides a distinct yet mutually reinforcing source of resilience. Their military arms sustain deterrence and coercive credibility; their social infrastructure generates moral authority through service provision; and their political participation institutionalises influence within formal governance structures. This triadic configuration enables hybrid organisations to resist sustained military pressure and adapt to changing political conditions. For states such as Israel, confronting such actors demands a holistic strategy that targets all three dimensions of

their power simultaneously. Yet, historically, Israel's conventional security strategy posture has been dominated by kinetic logic, and its reliance on military coercion has repeatedly overlooked the complex interplay among legitimacy, identity, and governance that sustains hybrid entities. Both of its interventions in Lebanon, in 1982 and 2006, illustrate how force projection without structural reform merely reproduces the very conditions that nourish hybrid movements. In each case, military action weakened the Lebanese state, deepened insecurity, and reinforced the grievances, from which Hezbollah derived its ideological coherence and social authority.

From an analytical standpoint, Israel's lack of a formal doctrine until 2014 is not a bureaucratic coincidence but a symptom of a deeper strategic ambivalence. The absence of codified principles provides operational flexibility, yet it also reflects a reluctance to engage with the political and moral dimensions of security strategy. To articulate a doctrine is to define limits, and limits, for a democratic state, imply accountability. By avoiding a comprehensive doctrinal framework, Israel has maintained a discretionary operational space that is largely unconstrained by legal or normative boundaries. Yet this very absence exposes a strategic paradox. Sustainable strategy ultimately requires a degree of political compromise through negotiation, power-sharing, or conditional inclusion. For Israel, such measures risk conferring legitimacy upon actors it defines as terrorists, as occurred with the PLO during the Oslo process. Consequently, tactical flexibility has been substituted for strategy. While this approach offers short-term operational convenience, it perpetuates long-term strategic drift.

Neutralising a hybrid organisation requires more than degrading its capacity for violence; it demands dismantling the infrastructures of legitimacy that sustain it. As Ganor (2012, p. 24) and Hoffman (2014, p. 465) emphasise, countering such adversaries entails identifying and eroding their multiple centres of gravity. In Hezbollah's case, these centres are deeply layered. The military wing derives its strength primarily from external sponsorship and especially Iran's financial, logistical, and ideological support. Without curbing or containing this transnational supply chain, Israel cannot sustainably weaken Hezbollah's coercive capacity. Measures such as targeted economic sanctions, regional intelligence coordination, and diplomatic engagement aimed at constraining Iranian proxy networks are thus necessary but insufficient on their own.

Equally significant is Hezbollah's social wing, which grounds the organisation in the everyday life of Lebanese society. Its extensive welfare apparatus, encompassing healthcare, education, reconstruction, and local arbitration, emerged as a direct response to Lebanon's chronic governance deficits. As Baylouny (2010, p. 138) notes, weak or absent state institutions create functional holes that non-state actors can fill, transforming provision into legitimacy. Hezbollah's success lay precisely in occupying these voids, converting social dependency into political loyalty. Consequently, an effective counter-hybrid strategy must aim not merely to destroy Hezbollah's welfare infrastructure but to render it redundant by strengthening the Lebanese state's capacity to deliver public goods. International donors, regional partners, and even indirect Israeli support through multilateral frameworks should focus on bolstering local governance, rebuilding state legitimacy, and investing in civil infrastructure across southern Lebanon. Unless viable alternatives to Hezbollah's welfare network exist, attempts to dismantle it will only deepen social dependence and resentment.

The political wing constitutes the most complex and enduring component of Hezbollah's hybrid power. Through participation in parliamentary elections and coalition politics, Hezbollah has embedded itself within Lebanon's confessional system. Its alliances

with Christian and Sunni factions, however pragmatic, have provided it with insulation against external isolation. Any attempt to delegitimise Hezbollah must, therefore, consider the intricate pluralism of Lebanese politics. Blanket isolation risks alienating moderate factions and weakening the fragile balance of confessional power. Instead, diplomatic efforts should prioritise empowering pluralist coalitions, civil society networks, and municipal institutions that can counterbalance Hezbollah's dominance without collapsing the broader political order.

The upheavals of the Arab Spring and the Syrian civil war briefly appeared to weaken Hezbollah's regional standing. Its intervention in Syria alongside Iran and the Assad regime undermined its long-cultivated image as a pan-Arab resistance movement. For the first time, Hezbollah faced internal accusations of hypocrisy for fighting fellow Muslims in defence of a dictatorship. Within Lebanon, critics accused the movement of abandoning its promises of *Lebanonisation* and reverting to the role of an Iranian proxy. This moment seemed to offer Israel a strategic opportunity: both Hezbollah and Iran were overstretched, devoting immense human and financial resources to a conflict beyond Israel's immediate theatre. International condemnation of Tehran's support for Assad further isolated both actors and appeared to constrain Hezbollah's mobility.

Yet the evolution of the Syrian conflict soon reversed these dynamics. The emergence of the Islamic State (ISIS) and the subsequent Russian intervention fundamentally altered the strategic landscape. What initially appeared as a quagmire for Hezbollah and Iran evolved into an arena for consolidation. The international community's growing fear of post-Assad instability shifted global priorities from regime change to containing jihadist extremism, inadvertently rehabilitating Iran and Hezbollah as pragmatic actors in the effort to contain jihadist extremism. This inversion of strategic narratives echoes a broader historical pattern: militant non-state actors often emerge from the wreckage of failed interventions. ISIS, for instance, arose from the institutional vacuum left by the 2003 United States of America-led invasion of Iraq, when former Ba'athist officers of Saddam Hussein's army reconstituted themselves as insurgents. The parallel with Hezbollah's emergence after the 1982 Lebanon War is striking, as external intervention created the very grievances and institutional voids that allowed these movements to flourish. In both cases, foreign occupation transformed local insecurity into transnational insurgency.

This continuity underscores a fundamental lesson: Military interventions in fragile states rarely eradicate violent non-state actors; they tend instead to reproduce them in new and adaptive forms. The Syrian theatre, thus, serves as a test of strategic memory for Israel. The Lebanon syndrome, defined as the dissonance between overwhelming power and persistent insecurity, serves as a warning against revisionist overreach. Any attempt to replicate the logic of pre-emption in Syria would likely repeat the same cycle: short-term tactical gains followed by long-term instability. Hezbollah's entrenchment in Syria demonstrates the fluidity and cross-border adaptability of hybrid threats. No longer confined to Lebanon, the organisation now operates through transnational logistics and command networks, which blur the line between domestic resistance and regional projection. Despite repeated Israeli warnings that Hezbollah's presence near its border would not be tolerated, the group has entrenched itself as a regional actor rather than a local militia, consolidating a new axis of influence extending from Tehran to Beirut via Damascus.

Developments since October 7, 2023, have further sharpened the policy stakes of containment and delegitimisation in the Israeli-Hezbollah confrontation. The war in Gaza

was accompanied by sustained Israel-Hezbollah exchanges along the northern frontier, generating large-scale displacement on both sides of the border and intensifying concerns about a prolonged multi-front confrontation (UNHCR, 2024; Security Council Report, 2024). Through 2024, Israel expanded strikes and targeted killings against Hezbollah commanders and related infrastructure in Lebanon, while Hezbollah maintained rocket, drone, and missile attacks into northern Israel, again underscoring the limits of coercion as a route to political neutralisation (Reuters, 2024). In parallel, the collapse of Assad's rule in December 2024 introduced major uncertainty into Syria's political and security order, with potential implications for the regional lines of influence and logistical arrangements that had structured Hezbollah's operating environment (Reuters, 2024a). Taken together, these developments do not extend the empirical analysis beyond 2006, but they illustrate how the same coercion-legitimacy mechanism continues to shape strategic outcomes under multi-theatre conditions. They reinforce that the contest is not only about capabilities but also about legitimacy under conditions of sustained civilian exposure and political narrative competition.

Precisely for that reason, the key battleground in such confrontations is not only the material balance of force but also the maintenance and erosion of public consent. Hezbollah's resilience is rooted in its ability to convert coercive pressure into renewed consent and organisational endurance. Each component of its hybrid structure, including the military, political, and social dimensions, depends on the acquiescence or active support of the communities it claims to defend. Public legitimacy is the ultimate centre of gravity for any hybrid organisation. This fact helps explain Hezbollah's consistent use of human shields and its moral framing of warfare as defensive jihad. By drawing Israel into operations that inevitably cause civilian casualties, Hezbollah undermines the moral foundation of Israel's security narrative. The struggle, thus, extends beyond physical confrontation into the realm of meaning and perception. Each act of Israeli retaliation, however militarily justified, risks reinforcing Hezbollah's narrative of victimhood and moral superiority.

Consequently, Israel's security strategy must evolve from a doctrine of deterrence to a strategy of containment and delegitimisation. Militarily, precision and proportionality are essential, not merely as ethical principles but as strategic necessities. Each instance of disproportionate retaliation strengthens Hezbollah's moral capital and erodes Israel's claim to restraint. Intelligence coordination, cyber disruption, and covert interference with financial and logistical channels offer means to degrade Hezbollah's capacity without feeding its narrative of persecution. Politically, Israel must accept that absolute isolation is neither feasible nor desirable. Instead, it should seek indirect mechanisms of de-escalation through international mediators while reinforcing Lebanon's sovereignty and institutional autonomy. Socially, regional and international actors must collaborate to close the governance gaps that underpin Hezbollah's social authority. Finally, at the discursive level, Israel and its partners must engage in strategic communication that reframes the conflict in moral and civic terms, exposing Hezbollah's coercion of its own constituency and its dependence on external patrons.

In sum, confronting a hybrid organisation like Hezbollah requires abandoning the illusion of decisive victory. Long-term security will depend not on annihilating the adversary but on denying its relevance by reducing the social demand for what it provides and by undermining the legitimacy of the identity it represents. This means recognising that violent non-state actors are not merely threats but symptoms of deeper crises of governance and legitimacy. Israel's experience in Lebanon and Syria demonstrates the futility of substituting force for politics. True stability requires what Arreguin-Toft (2005, p. 23) calls "strategic

inversion"—defeating the weak by refusing to fight on their terms. Within this logic, overreaction refers to retaliatory escalation that extends beyond degrading Hezbollah's military capacity and generates wider political and ethical costs. In the 2006 war, this was visible in extensive bombardment, in the move toward holding Lebanon collectively responsible, and in the destruction of civilian areas such as Dahiyeh, all of which helped Hezbollah convert coercive pressure into renewed legitimacy. Escaping the terror trap described by Simon (2001), therefore, requires avoiding precisely this dynamic and reclaiming the moral and political initiative that such escalation repeatedly undermined. Only through a comprehensive, patient, and multidimensional strategy that addresses the military, social, and political foundations of hybrid power can the cycle of asymmetric insecurity begin to be broken.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the article explains Israel's repeated failure to neutralise Hezbollah despite overwhelming military superiority. Israel's short-term and coercion-centred security strategy targeted symptoms rather than structural sources of Hezbollah's power. Durability stems from the interaction of military, social, and political wings; pressure on one wing shifted the load to the others, while coercion elevated Hezbollah's status as Lebanon's defender.

This fact reveals a paradox at the core of Israel's doctrine: deterrence and technological dominance proved counterproductive against a hybrid adversary. The 1982 invasion generated grievances that fuelled mobilisation; the 2000 withdrawal supplied a victory narrative; and the 2006 war consolidated Hezbollah's image of endurance. Battlefield dominance translated into vulnerability in the domains where hybrid actors compete, namely legitimacy, identity, and governance. As Arreguin-Toft notes (2005, p. 24), the strong often lose by fighting on the wrong terrain; Simon's terror trap (2001, pp. 15-18) clarifies how disproportionate responses corrode moral authority and feed the adversary's story.

The contribution here is to reframe the confrontation as a political-social problem tied to weak governance and absent alternatives, not merely a security challenge. Hezbollah thrives where the state fails; punishing dependent communities validates its protective claim. Sustainable strategy, therefore, requires precision and proportionality alongside persistent disruption of Iranian supply lines; politically, isolation must be paired with strengthening Lebanese institutions and pluralist alternatives; socially, external partners should invest in state capacity so welfare and order are not monopolised by an armed movement.

Finally, the case underscores an ontological dimension: Israel's confrontations with Hezbollah unsettled its self-conception as guarantor of absolute security. Escaping this cycle requires a shift from defeating threats to managing environments by synchronising containment, deterrence, and selective engagement, as well as contesting Hezbollah within the realms of governance, welfare, and narrative. In asymmetric wars, victory is measured less by destruction than by the fading social demand for the adversary's services and story.

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AI-based tools (ChatGPT and Grammarly) have been used solely for grammar correction and proofreading purposes. These tools have been used for grammar correction of the text that has already been prepared by the author and have not been used to produce new ideas, arguments, or substantial content. The full responsibility for the integrity and originality of the article belongs to the author.

Notes

1 The *Amal* Movement, which means "hope" in Arabic, was founded in 1974 by Imam Musa al-Sadr to represent Lebanon's marginalised Shia population. Initially reformist and secular, it later militarised during the civil war, as state authority collapsed and external interventions intensified. Israeli operations in the south and the ideological influence of the Iranian Revolution produced internal rifts that eventually led to the emergence of Hezbollah as a more radical offshoot (Alagha, 2011, 31-58).

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