

Hizbullah Today, In the Wake of the 2006 War on Lebanon

By [Brett Redmayne-Titley](#)

Global Research, February 18, 2018

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [History](#)

With the last shot of the 2006 war fired and the IDF moving back into Israel, Lebanon began to heal its wounds. At the same time, Hizbullah, that had so successfully turned back the tides of war, began to rebuild- this time in new ways.

Using the respect it had gained by fighting for all of Lebanon, while the Lebanese army looked on from safe havens to the north, Hizbullah began the decade-long process of moving from a purely defensive military to a full faceted political organization. Leader Nasrallah has been consistent, methodical and unwavering in these nationalist goals and by doing so has dragged the previously western aligned Lebanese political parties into having to similarly support their country first or die at the ballot box. All signs point to resounding success.

The memory of the 2006 war- and its resulting horrors- lives on daily in the minds of all, here. However, without exception, the dozens of Lebanese interviewed for this article made it very clear that they want peace above all else. However, a thorough understanding of Israeli expansionism- past and present- temper their optimism.

Beyond an improved military, the fundamental change has been in the [area of access to public social services, once substantially missing under the pre-2006 Lebanese government](#). During and after the 1975-90 civil war, the Lebanese central government of that time neglected service provisions for the public. Municipal elections were not held for 35 years, and thus the municipalities' human, financial and technical capacities deteriorated, rendering them mere skeleton institutions. In a parliament that has too often in the past echoed the false western model of democracy in that it ignores the true interests of those that did cast votes in their favour, here in Lebanon it is Hizbullah that is unwavering in directly representing all Lebanese regardless of religion or former nationality.

Hizbullah runs a range of philanthropic and commercial activities including hospitals, medical centres, schools, orphanages, rehabilitation centres for the handicapped, supermarkets, gas stations, construction companies, a radio station (Nur) and public service television station ([Al Manar](#)). Health care is now universal and heavily subsidized, if not free. These services directly benefited the Lebanese who desperately needed these improvements and has also been the direct reflection of the past Lebanese government and its previous unwillingness to provide these services.

Asked about the religious influence of Hizbullah within its philosophy of this nationalism, Hadi [see Part Four] commented,

“This is part of the reason. Lebanon has always been a country of many

cultures and many religions,” he begins. “The big difference is that the majority of Hizbullah, like Nasrallah, are Shi’a. We believe in education. We believe in tolerance for other cultures and religions. We include them!” Again he moves closer to make his point clear... “The Sunni culture does not include and tolerate. It does not promote education. When we fought in the war, Shia fought alongside Sunni... alongside Christians...alongside Druze. We all fought for this freedom and a free Lebanon. We fought for each other and did not care about religion. Lebanon is not...” and here Hadi stabs his index finger squarely into the table. “... Lebanon is not Saudi Arabia!”

While some of this social service infrastructure was in place in 2006, the fundamental change was in the area of inclusion. Being a Shi’a fundamentalist group, before the war, its public services, which [are primarily funded with a \\$1.2 Billion annual contribution by Shi’a Iran](#), were restricted dramatically to those of similar faith. When war came again, Hizbullah opened up its hospitals to all Lebanese as the casualty figures continued to mount. Here, Hizbullah quickly endeared itself to all religions and to the all Lebanese. This change to inclusion continued into other social improvements.



Hamas Flags Fly Around A Palestinian Refuge Camp in Sidon

According to Hadi, while Israel used the first UN cease-fire to remove the evidence of their defeat- the burned-out wreckage of almost two hundred tanks- out of view and back over the hills into Israel, the Lebanese documented the massive problems of restoring a deliberately destroyed infrastructure; roads, dams, electrical generation stations, bridges, airfields, the port and harbour, government buildings and hospitals.

Within its defence against future attack, Hezbollah has undertaken military resistance and healthcare and social-service activities with equal zeal. [In 1996, Israel again attacked southern Lebanon](#), causing a great deal of damage to infrastructure. After this attack, Hezbollah began the process of reconstruction. [Its statistics show that, in two months, it rebuilt 5,000 homes in 82 villages, repaired roads and infrastructure, and paid compensation to 2,300 farmers](#). As a result of these activities, Hezbollah was rewarded with more support from Shiites, who offered their votes to members running for parliament.

Later, in 2006, Hizbullah's health and social services occupied a central role in the defence against Israel and in the aftermath of the war. Following the thirty-four day Israeli bombardment, Hizbullah's first action was to stop its military efforts and divert all its energy toward social services and reconstruction. Hezbollah provided displaced people with water, food and shelter, and also promised to pay compensation to people whose houses had been destroyed, offering \$12,000 for rent and furniture until homes were reconstructed. These activities have increased the public confidence in Hezbollah, but they constitute only a small part of the party's social services.

Postwar, Nasrallah recognized the benefits that these services provided to his shift into becoming a formal political party. This contributed to an increasingly political presence and shamed the Lebanese parliament into increasing national funding for similar public improvements in order to counter the growing popularity of its new parliamentary rival. Today, Hizbullah can no longer be so easily dismissed by the West as merely a "*Terrorist Organization*"- a moniker no longer accepted by the European Union and the more rational nations of the world, despite US insistence.

In endearing itself to the Lebanese public as a whole, Hezbollah has developed a highly organized system of health and social-service organizations. The service system is made up of [the Social Unit; the Education Unit; and the Islamic Health Unit, which together make up its network of national service providers.](#) Before 2006, many of Hezbollah's service organizations were legally registered with the Lebanese government as NGOs, a status that provided certain legal protections and helped its collaboration with other organizations that were predisposed against the "*Hezbollah*" name. Due to its rise in formal and respectable political power this facade is no longer necessary.

[The Social Unit is an umbrella for four organizations: the Jihad Construction Foundation; the Martyrs' Foundation; the Foundation for the Wounded; and the Khomeini Support Committee.](#) [The post-war Jihad Construction Foundation, Jihad El Binaa,](#) became one of the most important services in Lebanon. Prior, this institution was responsible for infrastructure construction and delivered water to about 45 percent of the residents of Beirut's southern suburb. Following the Israeli aerial bombardment of Lebanon in summer 2006, the Jihad Construction Foundation became indispensable, assessing damage and paying reconstruction compensation to residents of southern Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburb.

In turn, the Martyr's Foundation provides continued financial assistance for those families who lost relatives in the war as does the Foundation for the Wounded for the disabled. Combined, these three financial programs have given assurance to Lebanese that they can expect the same support should Lebanon be attacked again.

Hezbollah's Islamic Health Unit also has a vital function in meeting public health needs. As of 2007, it operated three hospitals, twelve health centres, twenty infirmaries, and twenty dental clinics. The Islamic Health unit became so effective that it was asked to assume the operation of several government hospitals in Southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. This unit provides health care to low-income populations at little or no cost. Additionally, the Islamic Health unit is involved in offering free health insurance and prescription-drug coverage through a network of local pharmacies. To examine this claim I ask my driver and translator, Kifah, who is about to have his second child- a boy- if this applies to him since he and his wife are not Shi'a; they are Druze. He admits that his wife's work for a local medical

centre is of an extra benefit but confirms,

“Yes, for us we pay nothing. This is the same for most of the Lebanese people, except for some who have money. Those must pay something. For everyone else it is free.”

Hezbollah’s Educational Unit also provided much-needed services particularly in the area of Education. Prior to 2000 primary and secondary schooling was considered to be very poor, with the exception of private schools which were well beyond the financial means of most. Hizbullah began to operate its own network of schools which charged a modest fee to Shi’a. The end result was that via this example the Lebanese government followed suit and primary and secondary education is now universal and free.

Hizbullah still operates its own schools and reportedly serves over 14,000 students while also providing for libraries, scholarships, and financial assistance for books, which it buys in bulk and distributes at cost. Hizbullah’s improvements in education go along way in a population that has a large Shi’a base and that highly values education within the tenants of their religion.



In today’s Lebanon, Hizbullah uses its military successes, its social infrastructure improvements and a professional media presence to present to its public and the world a viable governmental alternative within the parliament and at the ballot box. Not surprisingly, its national popularity continues to grow. Currently, Hizbullah holds twelve of the 128 parliamentary seats available to Muslim political parties, but via the recent March 8 Coalition has fifty-seven seats under its influence. Further, it holds increased power via two of the three very powerful Cabinet positions. With the first national election in nine years tentatively set for May 7, 2018, it is likely that its share of power will increase.

The current Lebanese parliamentary structure is a result of the negotiations that ended the Civil War. A unique feature of the Lebanese parliament is the principle of “*confessional distribution*.” Prior, during elections held between 1932 and 1972, seats were apportioned between Christians and Muslims in a 6:5 ratio. By the 1960s, Muslims had become openly resistant to this system. Postwar, [The Taif Agreement of 1989](#), which effectively ended the civil war, reapportioned the Parliament to provide for equal representation of Christians and Muslims, with each electing 64 of the 128 deputies. With this, each religious community- Shia, Sunni, Alawite, Christian, Druze and Hizbullah- campaigns for the parliamentary seats. In 1992, Hizbullah participated in Lebanese elections for the first time, winning 12 out of 128 seats in parliament. In 1996, the organization won 10 seats, and in 2000 they took 8.

However, post-2006 war, in the election of 2009 Hizbullah won its twelve seats. With the

Israelis keeping the 2006 horrors firmly on the minds of all Lebanese almost weekly in the Arab press, or daily to the east in Syria, it seems safe to say that Hizbullah is not a long shot in gaining a legitimate coalition majority in the May election. For this to happen, it must be because of, not a Shi'a majority, but a Lebanese people's majority made up of all Muslim religious affiliations as well as Christian. One overriding Constitutional Law makes this indeed possible: Universal suffrage, whereby all voters can vote for any party of their choice, many of whom currently have one foremost political interest: *self-preservation*.

Lebanon is unusual in that its cabinet of three ministers is by law the country's executive authority, effectively more powerful than the president, prime minister or parliament, which is the body that elects the cabinet to begin with. This means that a coalition of party seats can bring in a Cabinet of their choosing. It is here that the political power of Hizbullah is clearly shown.

To this end, Hizbullah first negotiated the March 14 Alliance between several parties including Christian and Sunni. The result is that in late December 2009 Lebanon's parliament swore in a new cabinet dominated by Hezbollah. This move provided for the election of two pro- Hizbullah cabinet ministers and next, Hizbullah loyalist, former general **Michel Aoun** into the office of President. Holding the cabinet majority and the presidency is of no small political value.

However, the office of prime minister has been a rather divisive influence as was shown by **Saad Hariri's** (son of the father) breaking ranks from the [March 14 Alliance](#) regarding the vote for president Aoun. Hariri, having miscalculated his personal power, finally conceded and endorsed the former general, however, this broke the alliance almost completely.

Most recently, Hariri's conspicuous exodus to Saudi Arabia and France- and reportedly Iran- has not helped his reputation within the parliament or the people. The alliance of the FPM and Hezbollah has been a new and strengthening coalition that now shows itself as the [March 8 coalition](#) of mostly Shi'a parties as a reaction to Hariri's many perceived defections.

Further, in February 2006, Michel Aoun and Hassan Nasrallah signed a memorandum of understanding that called for a broad range of reforms, such as guaranteeing equal media access for candidates and allowing expatriate voting. This was an attempt to thwart the existing Hariri-Jumblatt coalition's grip on power. The FPM-Hezbollah memorandum met with virtually unanimous consent in the Shiite community and is certainly a strong indication of Hizbullah's political savvy. Further, according to a poll by the Beirut Center for Research and Information, 77% also approved of this within the Christian community. With just a few months before the new election, this cross-religious support is an indication of the likely result at the ballot box.

Lebanon Today: Of the People... by the People...for the People!

Hizbullah as a military unit no longer maintains a rivalry and autonomy from the Lebanese army. Hadi points out that Hassan Nasrallah has publicly announced his support for the army and of parliament. Considering the very large Lebanese army presence across Beirut concentrating near the southern border, this makes for a stronger deterrent. Hadi confirms that in terms of tactics, munitions, supply and command Hizbullah remains independent, but that if Lebanon is attacked again both militaries will communicate on strategy and share intelligence. Neither occurred in 2006.

Hadi, like the dozens of people, interviewed in Beirut and across Lebanon, desire peace. Sadly, they know that war has never been up to them. War since 1963 has always been brought to their land, and barely turned back each time. Even the purported civil war was manufactured externally and then left to boil over on the streets of every town; particularly Beirut. Hadi points out the similarities to what has happened in nearby Syria, despite the fact that most Lebanese detest the Syrians for their long-ago role in fomenting that civil war at the behest of the Americans and Israelis.

Hadi's sentiments were repeated many times with the many people interviewed in the bars, cafes and streets of Beirut and while exploring Lebanon. A reporter with professional intentions has nothing to fear in Lebanon from the people or from Hizbullah. The Palestinian refugee camps are quite another matter and are exceptional dangerous but they are dispersed across Lebanon and quite obvious while guarded by the UN. But, on the southern border, a new war seems to be brewing once again.

Israel has again begun its pre-war rhetoric, clearly stating it will invade again in order to stop the growing Hizbullah military. This, as is the reality of nationalism... ignores what Hizbullah, today, really is. It is not a military. It is not a political party. It is not a socialist movement. Hizbullah is...Lebanon!

In this, lies its true power: The power of its people... and their natural, human desire for freedom from oppression.

Our conversation now winding down, we both stand and with a firm hand shake- a grip that leaves a lasting impression- I look for the last time into the deep hard eyes of a man who has put his faith in his party, in his nation, in his people- and in this reporter- to come together and stop the growing advent of a renewed, tragic war.

"Will you fight again?" is the final question, still hanging in the air.

Releasing my hand, Hadi answers with a more-*the most*- important question; one that sums up all that we have spoken of during this long enlightening morning over coffee.

"Will we have a choice?"

Indeed.

*

Author's Note: This concludes Part Four of this series from Istanbul and Lebanon. Please see Part One, Part Two, Part Three and Part Four for background info. not repeated here. Next Up, Part Five: "The Hills of South Lebanon- Why Israel Has Already Lost."

Brett Redmayne-Titley has published over 150 in-depth articles over the past seven years for news agencies worldwide. Many have been translated. On-scene reporting from important current events has been an emphasis that has led to multi-part exposes on such topics as the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations, NATO summit, KXL Pipeline, Porter Ranch Methane blow-out and many more. He can be reached at: *live-on-scene*((at))*gmx.com*. Prior articles can be viewed at his archive: www.watchingromeburn.uk

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: **[Brett Redmayne-Titley](#)**

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca