



Dimensions
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study



Hezbollah:

Present Roles and Future Scenarios
Current roles and future scenarios

Prepared by:
Rabih Dandishli

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Dimensions for Strategic Studies

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Introduction

Hezbollah's roles in Lebanon have evolved since 2006,¹ when it consolidated its political alliances, and then increased its representation in the Lebanese state in 2008,² leading to its involvement in the Syrian war since 2012,³ and its emergence as a regional force supporting pro-Iranian armed organizations, after it faced one enemy, Israel, while its allies won the majority in Parliament in 2018.⁴ The party has based its position and attitudes towards local and regional files on these crucial junctures, imposing equations by virtue and in light of its gains and losses throughout that period.

- (1) On 6 February 2006, the Secretary-General of Hizballah, Hassan Nasrallah, and the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement of Lebanon, Michel Aoun, signed a memorandum of understanding, the so-called "Mar Makhail Document", which was signed at the church of Mar Makhail, south of Beirut. After the July 2006 war came Security Council resolution 1701, where the Lebanese Army and the international emergency forces were deployed on the border with occupied Palestine. On 30 October 2006, CPN-M and its allies held a sit-in in central Beirut in front of the Government headquarters after Nasrallah set the zero hour for the overthrow of Fouad Siniora's Government, demanding a government of national unity. The party had withdrawn its ministers from the Government in rejection of the International Court in the case of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.
- (2) Eighteen months after its inception, the sit-in was broken up following the agreement reached between Lebanese parties in the Qatari capital of Doha on 21 May 2008, following the 7 May 2008 sectarian events, during which Hizballah took military and armed control of the capital, Beirut, following the introduction of its own communications network. A government of national unity was formed in which Hezbollah and its allies obtained a third plus one ratio, which enables it to obstruct the government at any time, which happened in subsequent periods, as it froze the political process in Lebanon. As a result of that, there was no extension of the House of Representatives twice from 2013 until the 2018 elections, after causing the loss of the quorum of the Council of Ministers to establish an election law, and the quorum in the House of Representatives to elect a President of the Republic, which happened in 2016 after two years of presidential vacuum.
- (3) Between 2013 and 2014, several explosions took place in Hezbollah strongholds in Lebanon, as a result of its intervention in Syria. The party claimed that its intervention in Syria was to protect Lebanon from jihadists. The dispute between Hezbollah and Saudi Arabia escalated following the party's support for Bashar al-Assad and his alliance with Iran, which prompted Saudi Arabia to lead a move in the Arab League in 2016 to declare Hezbollah a "terrorist organization", after accusing it of carrying out "hostile acts." In 2016, a settlement regarding the Lebanese presidency was arrived at with the endorsement by Saad Hariri, who seconded the 8 March presidential candidate, Michel Aoun.
- (4) Before the elections and their results, there was an escalation of inflammatory rhetoric against Saudi Arabia, specifically on 9 October 2017, where Nasrallah said in a televised speech: Saudi Arabia, along with Israel, pose a "threat to regional peace and security." On 5 November 2017, Nasrallah considered that the resignation of Hariri was a decision dictated by Riyadh (and the party promoted the story of Hariri's abduction), and began to adhere to it as a candidate for the Prime Minister until today, knowing that between 2014 and 2017, a direct dialogue (41 sessions) took place between the future movement led by Hariri and Hezbollah, under the auspices of Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, with the aim of reducing sectarian tension, detachment from events in the region, especially in Syria, electing a president of the Republic and approving a new electoral law.



However, a new phase imposed on Hezbollah roles related to the situation in Lebanon, which can be determined by what happened after the elections of 6 May 2018, through the uprising of 17 October 2019, to the financial and economic crisis and the continuous social, economic and political deterioration since the beginning of 2020.

This is due to the external attitudes towards the party and the Lebanese state on the one hand, and the general mood internally on the other hand, after the party and its allies won a parliamentary majority and the way its audience celebrated this victory.⁵

This is in addition to the announcement by its Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah⁶ that he would not remove his fighters from Syria, despite reports of his losses in Syrian territory.

While Hezbollah and its allies lost the majority in the Lebanese Parliament after the last elections, held on 15 May 2022, where the share of its team decreased from about 70 to about 60 deputies, the effects of the results of these elections need time to be clearly demonstrated, especially since the issue of the majority and the parliamentary minority alone does not control the decision-making process in Lebanon.⁷

Going back to 2018, it must be noted that that year witnessed the stabilization of the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria and the decline of opposition forces, as well as a decline in the intensity of the field conflict,

(5) "As soon as the polling stations were closed, the streets were opened to the so-called sectarian escapees and "shabbiha" of Hezbollah and the Amal movement, and they started roaming the streets on their motorcycles with inflammatory and provocative songs that continued until after midnight, some of which reached for an armed parade and an attack on the properties of opponents in Beirut in several areas of the country, according to published video recordings." ("Results of the Lebanese elections between" Al-Mashabih "and Al-Hasarah", Al-Jazeera Channel, 8/5/2018: bit.ly/3iK3l5c)

(6) In his speech on 8 June 2018, on the occasion of World Jerusalem Day, Nasrallah said: "I want to tell you: If the whole world meets to force us to get out of Syria, it cannot get us out of Syria. If the whole world came together. There is only one case, that the Syrian leadership comes along and tells us: Guys, may God give you good health; we are grateful, we are thankful. God Almighty suffices Believers Fighting. war is over. Carry on, and leave», Knowing that the party in 2011 was denying its involvement in the war, and it began in 2013 announcing the opposite gradually.

(7) The alliances sometimes overlap in the decision-making process in Lebanon, which occurred on 31 May 2022, with the election of two Hezbollah allies in the presidency and vice-presidency of the parliament, namely, the President of the Amal Movement, Nabih Berri (President for a seventh term), and the Deputy in the Free Patriotic Movement, Elias Bassab (Vice-President).

and the division of influence between regional forces in the country.⁸

Hezbollah has been viewed by the Gulf and international community, as well as by a large part of the citizens of Lebanon, as the decision maker in the Lebanese state, after accumulations of events and political and field options over the past decade, to which the results of the 2018 elections have been added.

On May 15, 2018 under the administration of President Donald Trump,⁹ an "American-Gulf" agreement was reached to include ten Hezbollah leaders on the list of terrorism, including five members of the Party's Shura Council, first and foremost, its Secretary-General, Hassan Nasrallah,¹⁰ through a statement from Saudi Arabia (mentioning Qatar and Oman, but they did not issue statements despite their membership in the "Centre for Targeting Terrorist Financing"), while the UAE, Bahrain, and Kuwait issued similar statements.

In addition, the 2018 parliamentary elections were followed by a government vacuum lasting more than eight months before Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri announced the formation of his government on 31 January 2019. Hariri faced complications during consultations with the President of the Republic on the sharing of ministerial portfolios and on the Hezbollah¹¹ clause, which delayed the birth of the Government for so long.

(8) The Syrian regime's campaign against opposition strongholds began on 18 February 2018, specifically over the cities and towns of eastern Ghouta, where it controlled more than 75% of the region with Russian support and Iranian militias. With the entry of March 2018, various armed factions began announcing their agreement with the Russian party on a ceasefire and deporting of those who rejected the agreement to the north. This was followed by the regime's control of the southern region of Syria, starting from 19 June 2018, with the support of Russian forces and some Iranian-backed militias, and an agreement was announced between the opposition factions and the Russian side on a ceasefire. In September 2018, the Russian and Turkish sides agreed to establish a demilitarized zone in Idlib to serve as an exile for those who reject the settlement with the regime as a place for factions described as extremists.

(9) Officials in the White House said: The Trump administration is working to change the US policy towards Hezbollah, and to abandon the "permissive attitude" that former President Barack Obama has adopted in his dealings with the party since the signing of the nuclear agreement with Iran in 2015. In May 2018, Trump announced the withdrawal of the United States from this agreement.

(10) In addition to his deputy, Naim Qasim, Muhammad Yazbak, Hussein Khalil, and Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyid, as well as four companies, a statement issued by the Targeting Centre for Terrorist Financing, which was established on 21 May 2017 in Riyadh during Trump's visit, said: It is linked to the party. The assets and possessions of the individuals have been frozen.

(11) This requirement was that six Sunni deputies close to Hezbollah and opposed to Hariri were represented in the Government by a minister, which Hariri refused to be part of his quota. The Government was formed after President Michel Aoun had agreed that the deputies would be represented by a minister from within his quota.



The formation of the Government was supposed to open Lebanon's door to multi-billion-dollar grants and loans pledged by the international community in support of the economy,¹² while linking its assistance to Lebanon's achievement of a series of reforms and an improvement in the much-reduced growth rate.¹³

The collapsing economy, coinciding with many crises that continued after a year, until 2019¹⁴ led to the explosion of the protest movement in Lebanon on 17 October,¹⁵ which raised the slogan of fighting corruption and "killun Ya'ni Killun/All means All" i.e. "all corrupt officials should be out" and confronting the authority and ruling parties, including Hezbollah.

Parties in power have faced such protests in all parts of Lebanon, including through accusations,¹⁶ supporters, Shabbiha/ "brutal outlaws", security and military forces.

Hariri resigned from the presidency days after those protests erupted.

In 2020 and 2021, Lebanon witnessed the formation of two governments, after political battles and difficult labour, including the government of Hassan Diab, which was formed of ministers affiliated with Hezbollah and its allies without the participation of their opponents and foes;¹⁷

(12) The most prominent loans were those associated with the Cedar conference hosted by Paris in April 2018.

(13) 1% recorded between 2016 and 2018, compared to 9.1 percent in the three years prior to the outbreak of the conflict in Syria.

(14) Lebanon has witnessed an increase in public debt and fiscal deficits, the waste crisis that has been going on since 2015 amidst controversy over landfills, the crisis of appointments to the State and security agencies, the refugee crisis (thousands of which have been voluntarily returned), the electricity crisis, the water crisis and the livelihood crises that have been linked to awaiting the formation of the Government, waiting for foreign assistance and the conditions of the international community as a result of the intervention and influence of Hezbollah, in addition to the American sanctions that have affected the banking sector.

(15) Protests began following the proposal of the Hariri Minister of Communications, Mohamed Shuqair, to impose a fee on free communications via electronic messaging applications such as WhatsApp to increase state revenues.

(16) On 25 October 2019, Nasrallah said, regarding the exploitation of the political movement: "The movement is being led by certain well-known parties, and I do not want to name them today, and well-known political forces and various gatherings known by their names and persons."

The southern and central regions of Beirut witnessed several incidents of Shiite dual supporters attacking demonstrators with violence, beatings and cracking under the pretext of criticizing Nasrallah and Barri.

(17) Six ministers of the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) quota, two ministers of the Amal Movement, two ministers of the Mardah party, two ministers of Hezbollah, one minister of the Tashnag Party, one minister of the Lebanese Democratic Party (and Minister Manal Abdel Samad, who was said to be part of Walid Jumblatt's quota but denied it) and four ministers of the Prime Minister Hassan Diab's quota, which he and his allies have named. The Government resigned on 10 August 2020 following the port explosion and subsequent demonstrations against the political class, and remained in business until the formation of the Government of Najib Mikati on 10 September 2021.



and which was accompanied by a financial and economic collapse, paralysis in government and educational institutions, the collapse of vital sectors, the most important of which is electricity,¹⁸ the collapse of the national currency against the dollar and the decline in the purchasing power of citizens.

At that time, the assassination of the leader of the Iranian Al-Quds Force, Qassem Soleimani, took place on 3 January 2020. In a speech on 5 January, Nasrallah considered that his death represented the beginning of a new era in the history of the Middle East, threatening the US army to pay the price.¹⁹

Then came the Beirut port explosion on 4 August 2020, in which half of the Lebanese capital was damaged and more than 200 people killed and hundreds injured. That was immediately followed on 6 August 2020 by the visit of French President Emmanuel Macron to Beirut, where he called for an initiative to accelerate the formation of a technocratic government; and he linked with international support.

Macron accused politicians of committing “collective betrayal” at the time he gave it time after time.

Although Nasrallah agreed to the initiative, he criticized Macron's bossy style.²⁰

At a time when Nasrallah demanded an investigation into the port explosion and expressed his distrust of an international investigation, which subsequently led to the dismissal of the judicial investigator Fadi Sawan, Judge Tariq Bitar²¹ (who completed what his predecessor had begun).

(18) Especially after November 2019, when banks imposed severe restrictions on withdrawals and remittances abroad, after the Diab government announced on 7 March 2020 the suspension and restructuring of a 1,2\$ billion debt, and on 23 March the Ministry of Finance announced the cessation of payment of all outstanding Eurobond in dollars.

(19) Nasrallah said: “It is a cut-off date between two stages in the region. It is the beginning of a new phase and a new history, not for Iran or Iraq, but for the entire region.”

(20) In a speech on 29 September 2020, Nasrallah stressed that such a welcome did not mean approval of any government or that the French President would act as “prosecutor, investigator, judge, referee, guardian, ruler and guardian of Lebanon.” He said: “We do not accept that you accuse us of having committed treason.” We reject and condemn this high-handed behavior on us and on all political forces, “adding:” We do not accept this language or this method.”

(21) Judge Fadi Sawan Ali, the head of the caretaker government, Hassan Diab, and former Minister of Finance Ali Hassan Khalil and former Ministers of Public Works Ghazi Zaiter and Yusuf Fenianos, have pleaded guilty to carelessness and negligence, causing death and injury to hundreds of people. The three ministers are affiliated to Hezbollah's allies, the Amal Movement and Tayyar-el-Murdeh of Franjeh.

Things came to a point of warning his successor that he should be accused of politicization and discretion.²²

This was followed by the so-called " Tayouna events ",²³ which was set before the Lebanese and military courts for investigation by Hezbollah.

During the economic crisis, which Hizballah considers to be an act of sanctioning it and the Lebanese State, and with finally announcing the date of the parliamentary elections (held on 15 May 2022), the party had constantly criticized non-governmental organizations (NGOs)²⁴ for receiving Western support from embassies.

The party has also criticized the military establishment as recipients of American aid and support. Nasrallah's accusations culminated in a televised interview on 8 February 2022, in which he focused on American influence in Lebanon.²⁵

In addition to the regional events, as Hezbollah is²⁶ linked to the Islamic Republic of Iran , all these events contributed to the development of the party 's stand and internal position towards all upcoming events and developments aiming at three internal parties: civil society, the judiciary and the military establishment, given that the enemy of Hezbollah participating in the Lebanese state is the United States and Saudi Arabia. The party claims that they support associations, internal bodies, and institutions in Lebanon to confront it and besiege it with sanctions and conditions as well as with the upcoming elections. Accordingly, it has adopted such political, security, economic and media roles in addition to its regional roles.

(22) The first of these episodes began directly in Nasrallah's speech on 7 August 2021, when he also urged the families of the victims of the port explosion to demonstrate in front of the home of the judicial investigator Tariq Bitar.

(23) Hizballah and supporters of the Amal movement demonstrated against the course of the investigation into the 14 October 2021 port explosion, and armed clashes took place in the face of what Nasrallah said were armed men from the Lebanese Forces party.

(24) In light of the assistance provided by Arab and foreign countries to non-governmental associations and the cessation of their support for the Lebanese State and its institutions accused of corruption and demanding reforms.

(25) Nasrallah said: There is American political, security, financial and economic influence in Lebanon, and anyone who wants sovereignty must "face this destructive influence." He considered that the US ambassador's movements and her contacts with institutions in Lebanon, and the role of the US embassy and its assistance and offerings to the Lebanese army "is anomalous and has serious negative signals and must be addressed in one way or another."

(26) Such as the US elections, the nuclear agreement, the Israeli strikes on Syria, and the sanctions.





Second: The current roles of the party

1. The Media Role

It is known that Hezbollah has its media arms in Lebanon like Al-Manar TV, Al-Nour Radio, Al-Ahd newspaper (which has become electronic) and its websites, in addition to the party's media relations website.

Al-Mayadeen and Al-Akhbar are media outlets close to Hezbollah.

These media, which have been established in recent years and linked to the axis of Iran and to events ²⁷ in Yemen, Syria and Iraq, play a role in promoting Hezbollah's policy and positions, covering its activities and movements, targeting its public and the Arab and Islamic world, as well as opponents and enemies.²⁸

■ Promotion of young researchers

These media host what they call “researchers” and “analysts.” The party media outlets used to host analysts and journalists from Hezbollah's allies. Today they host media professionals, journalists and researchers, most of whom work in Hezbollah's media but not party affiliates or members.

(27) Hezbollah oversees the activities of Iran's Islamic Radio and Television Union in Lebanon, including the development of non-Lebanese media along the lines of the Houthi channel Al-Masirah, which broadcasts from the southern suburb of Beirut. There are also other entities established directly by the Islamic Radio and Television Union in the suburb, and managed by Hezbollah, including the Union Media Training Centre, the UNews news agency, and the Union Research and Development Center, also known as U-Feed. Hamdi Malik, 'Understanding Iran's Wide Media Network in the Arab Countries', 'Washington Institute for Near East Policy', 02/03/2021: bit.ly/3JT4of9

(28) Mohammed Afif also manages the Hezbollah Media Relations Service, and there is a network of media professionals whose mission is to promote the party's discourse, which is managed by the Head of the Liaison and Coordination Unit, Alhaji Wafiq Safa. Work on this network began in 2012 following the direct and public involvement of the party in the Syrian war. Safa tasked the media journalist Salem Zahran, who is the director of the Centre for Media Focus, with submitting a detailed plan about the penetration of Lebanese media institutions, including those that are against Hezbollah. This network includes journalists in newspapers such as Al-Nahar, the former "Assafiir", Al-Mustaqbal, Al-Jumhuriyah, and Al-Watan Call, in addition to journalists in visual institutions such as Al-Jadid channel, the Lebanese Foundation for Transmission (LBC), MTV, and OTV.



This is the case of Al-Mayadeen, Al-Akhbar newspaper and other media affiliated with the Syrian regime.²⁹

They have come to identify themselves as researchers and news figures; and through their media views, writing on the sites and publishing research³⁰ in their name, they "reveal" information (similar to what civil society in Lebanon has been doing since 2015, by opening corruption files and playing the role of the observatory of rights and violations by the authority and parties).

They market the positions of Hezbollah, specifically in the face of civil society in Lebanon, and with regard to resilience in the current economic crisis in the face of the "Gulf and American siege", and relations with the Gulf countries, most importantly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as well as targeting the Lebanese judiciary and army and criticizing the US embassy in Lebanon.

They also play a role in defending the Houthis in Yemen and the Syrian regime and speaking on their behalf.

■ Cyber Army

The above-mentioned persons, in addition to other names that have a presence on social media, also play a role in Hezbollah's electronic media, through their own accounts on Facebook and Twitter, being key accounts within the work of the e-army, which³¹ is run by the party similar to the e-armies of parties and personalities in Lebanon and abroad.

This cyber army currently has a media role in several files, the most important of which are: the 17 October Movement and smearing its reputation, the assassination of the activist and researcher Luqman Salim (opposition to Hezbollah),³² the decision of the International Court in August 2020 on the assassination of Rafik Hariri,

(29) Includes: Hadi Qubaisi, Hossam Matar, Hussein Morteza, Ali Murad, Mohammad Kazan, Nabil Abdul Satar and Khalil Nasrallah.

(30) Including Al-Nashher, Al-Khandaq, the Research Services Group (Project), Al-Etihad Research and Development Centre, Al-Madnan Centre for the Study of Salafi Movements, Researcher Centre for Palestinian Studies and Strategy, and the Advisory Centre for Studies and Documentation.

(31) Simia Group and Forum for Resistant Media.

(32) Hezbollah announced its decision not to extradite the accused from Hezbollah in the case via networking sites rather than through direct statements.



the diplomatic crisis with the Gulf following the statements of Foreign ³³ Minister Sharbel Wahbi, then Minister of Information ³⁴ George Qardahi, the maritime border demarcation negotiations, the port explosion, Israeli incursions into Syria and violations of Lebanese airspace, interaction with Nasrallah speeches, the subject of smuggling of drugs, attack and abuse of the Gulf States, the Yemeni war and Houthi missiles, the activities of the American ambassador to Lebanon, parliamentary elections and its alliances (in particular, Al Hariri and civil society), the alliance of Hezbollah and the Amal movement (the Shiite dual movement), the alliance with the Free Patriotic Movement, the attack on the Lebanese Forces Party, the Tayunah events, and Judge Bitar.³⁵

■ Advertising campaigns and propaganda

The airport road area in Beirut is an area for the propaganda promotion of Hezbollah through billboards along the highway and the tunnel that follows, and it is a road that has a strategic role in the media to transmit political and propaganda messages, as it connects Rafik Hariri International Airport with central Beirut, where the House of Representatives, the government headquarters, many embassies and the United Nations headquarters are located, and it passes to the outskirts of the southern suburbs of Beirut.

Hezbollah uses these paintings to place photos on the anniversary of the assassination of its leaders and Iranian leaders like Soleimani, as well as slogans related to the party's economic and social projects and its electoral slogans.

Pictures of the Director General of Public Security, Major General Abbas Ibrahim, were posted on these billboards in July 2021 after his name appeared in the Beirut port investigation file, as the forensic investigator, Judge Tariq Bitar, requested permission from the Minister of Interior in the caretaker government, Muhammad Fahmy, to pursue him.

(33) In the government of Hassan Diab (conduct of acts) against the Gulf and the Arabs (racist statements).

(34) In the government of Najib Mikati about the Yemen war.

(35) See "Controversy Analysis of Tariq Bitar's Social Media Investigations", by Nasri Masra, December 2021: www.usj.edu.lb/intranet/actu/pdf/1879_11408.pdf



The photos were ³⁶ signed by "Lovers of Major General Abbas Ibrahim", and the slogans: "Loyalty to the Major General", "With you, the noblest of men" and "Security and Safety Ambassador".

Also, in the midst of the diplomatic crisis with Saudi Arabia, banners and abusive pictures of the ³⁷ Gulf were posted, which prompted the Minister of Interior and Municipalities, Bassam Mawlawi, in the Mikati government, to order their unloading.

2. The Economic Role

Since the onset of the economic crisis, the collapse of the local currency in Lebanon and the seizure of depositors' money in banks, Nasrallah announced that the United States of America prevents the entry of the dollar into Lebanon, and that there is no fear for the environment of Hezbollah, as it is the one who brings the dollar into the country and the salaries of its members in dollars and will not leave them to starve.

While he also called for heading east, namely towards Iran, Iraq, Syria, Russia and China, ³⁸ as well as ³⁹ agricultural jihad, the party took several actions and steps to withstand, sustain and be unaffected by the pressures of living during the seemingly unresolved crisis, using its sources of funding and parallel institutions, ⁴⁰ which it had built since its establishment and subsequent involvement in the Lebanese State.⁴¹

(36) Major General Abbas Ibrahim considers Hezbollah a red line, and he supports it from his security and strategic position, knowing that Ibrahim is trying to maintain a neutral image and his role as a mediator in several security files.

(37) «Photo: offensive banner on the airport road after leaving Bukhari: we want to rinse the country!», «South» website, 1/11/2021: bit.ly/3OD3o1a

(38) « Nasrallah: We will respond to the siege», Al-Akhbar newspaper , 17/11/2020: [bit. ly/3LdR5XI](https://bit.ly/3LdR5XI)

(39) Nasrallah announced July 2020 ,7 as the date for declaring «Agricultural and Industrial Jihad». In a political-economic speech, Nasrallah explained the option of heading east, sending a series of messages to the Americans, most notably that their siege is pushing Lebanon towards the east.

(40) Al-Radn Al-Hassan Foundation, Al-Shahid Foundation, Jihad Al-Bina Foundation, and others.

(41) Control of the Ministry of Health before the Government of Mikati 2021, and its budget is the fourth highest in the country, amounting to approximately 350\$ million.



■ Ration Cards

Hezbollah distributed to its followers and supporters a ration card under the name ⁴² "Carpets", a card intended for non-partisans, with a ceiling of 400,000 and 500,000 Lebanese pounds, which allows its holders to use it once a month to buy goods and foodstuffs with a discount of up to 35% of the party's owned commercial centers.

Hezbollah also distributed a card dedicated to party members only, under the name of the "Card of Light", which provides a discount on food commodities ranging from 10 to 20%, and provides other services such as buying electronics and furniture. It also provides discounts in restaurants in the south. Party members also have a health card that provides hospital services with 90% coverage and a discount on medicines of up to 90% for the affiliates and for all members of their small families.

The party stores food in secret containers of unknown locations, which are not registered in the name of the party, in three geographical areas: the south, the Bekaa, and the southern suburbs of Beirut.

Electronics and furniture are purchased in instalments from a chain of shops that have contracts with the party.

■ Gasoline and fuel

Hezbollah created an office in the Bekaa region under the name of the " Oil Office", to manage the distribution of diesel fuel to the sectors and beneficiaries as determined by its Secretary-General, and the office is managed by Malik Yaghi.

On 16 September 2021, tanks loaded with Iranian diesel arrived in Lebanon through the Syrian border after Iranian vessels dug up their cargo in the port of Banias. ⁴³ Fuel was distributed through the party's power stations to hospitals, generators, ovens, serum factories and medicines in accordance with official pricing schedules and at less than cost and in Lebanese pounds.

(42) " Report": Hezbollah opens a chain of stores for its audience in the midst of an economic crisis ravaging Lebanon", France 24, 16/04/2021: bit.ly/36XaDzO

(43) There were 70 to 80 tanks, including a three-kilometre-long convoy, out of 4,200 tanks, 35,000 tons each, which arrived respectively.



It was also distributed to citizens in later stages, especially in the early winter, after requests were filled out and through cooperating with municipalities.

■ Projects

Through agricultural jihad, Hezbollah provides farmers with agricultural fertilizers, "torb", agricultural medicines, seeds and baby plants.

This was active in the western Bekaa and Baalbek-Hermel areas.

"Jihad al-Binaa", a construction Institution, is one of the main institutions that contributed to the implementation of these projects in addition to cooperation with municipalities in the targeted villages, which are affiliated with the influence of Hezbollah in the south and the Bekaa.

It also conducts fundraising campaigns in these villages for irrigation, electricity and food security projects.⁴⁴

Hezbollah reportedly distributed aid specifically in northern Lebanon in Akkar, after the Al Tilayl explosion on 15 August 2021.⁴⁵

■ Smuggling

Hezbollah controls crossings on the Lebanese-Syrian border that witness smuggling of goods, food, and other items, or the so-called "smuggling economy." Although several parties in Lebanon benefit from this reality, the most prominent accusation is that Hizballah is militarily stationed on this border and is an ally of the Syrian regime in addition to its legalization on such smuggling.⁴⁶

Smuggling also involved (and profited economically from) drug trafficking (Captagon),⁴⁷ although Hezbollah denied this and revealed that other Lebanese actors in Lebanon were involved.⁴⁸

(44) "Statistical Tricks" to Amplify "Hezbollah Aid" and "My Love's Burglary" on Donations!, "South" website, 24/04/2021: bit.ly/3Lqdi3P

(45) "Hezbollah moves in Akkar under the umbrella of humanitarian aid", Al-Sharq al-Awsat newspaper, 9/09/2021: bit.ly/3j6bnFP

(46) "Lebanese cleric considers smuggling legitimate to protect 'resistance'", "Independent Arabic", 24/04/2021: bit.ly/3JN9hpT

(47) Captagon Hezbollah invades Arab countries... Economic Resource or Systematic Targeting? ", TRT Arabic, 21/01/2022: bit.ly/3JW5d6J

(48) Al-Manar reveals the details of the Captagon orange operation, Al-Manar channel, 1/1/2022: bit.ly/3JVE8AK



3. Military and security role

On 18 October 2021, Nasrallah announced in a speech following the events of Tayyounah, and under the threat of the "Lebanese Forces" party, that the party has 100,000 fighters, which is the first time he revealed the numbers of his trained and professional fighters.

In his interview with Al-Alam TV on 8 February 2022, he hinted at the increase in this number, in addition to the possession and development of weapons, including air defences.

At a time when such statements were aimed at "communicating messages to the Israeli enemy," these statements are now directed at the Lebanese, Arab countries and the international community.

■ Lebanese Army

Hezbollah usually considers the Lebanese army to be a neutral party, but also a party to which can be relied upon in internal events, especially those of a seditious nature.

However, after the events of Tayouneh, this view began to change, especially since the party's public posted videos showing the army firing in the direction of the demonstrators from the party and the Amal movement.

Some party leaders quired about the role of the army in these incidents, in which they were victims at a time when they said they had placed their security in the custody of the army on that day.⁴⁹

But at the same time, Hezbollah still trusts the military establishment and some of the names in it, especially those related, for example, to the negotiations with the Israeli side in the delineation of the maritime border, or the army's treatment of roadblocks and street movements in the protests that have been repeated since 2019, or the military judiciary because there are officers and judges affiliated with the Shiite Hizballah and Amal Movement (as there are those affiliated with the rest of the political parties),

(49) "Hezbollah's campaign against the Lebanese army does not reach the request for the dismissal of its leader", Al-Sharq Al-Midat newspaper, 19/10/2021: bit.ly/36X3PCg



and the evidence that he put the vigilante of what he described as an "ambush of Tayona" in the custody of this judiciary and its investigations without holding accountable those accused by the party itself.⁵⁰

Recent developments, represented by increased US assistance to the Lebanese Army and the continued presence of the US ambassador to Lebanon, along with Army Commander Joseph Aoun, in army events and events, have become a subject for finger pointing by Nasrallah himself, who considered that anomalous and in need of treatment.

■ Securing the coastline and the capital

Following the events of 7 May 2008 and its incursion into Beirut, Hizballah secured the capital, Beirut, and progressively the capital became divided between the influence of Hizballah and its opponents and disassociated concerning events and developments with Hizballah and its allies being at an advantage.

This applies to other areas of Lebanon.

But the dilemma remains the Lebanese coastline.

Since the mobilization of 2019 and the closure of the coastal road linking Beirut to the south by the protesters and the complaints of Hezbollah about such movements hindering its freedom of movement in Beirut and the south, the party has sought to impose a new reality, and this has been evident over the past two years in the clashes that took place in the Khaldeh area between militants belonging to the resistance militias of the party and the tribes of the Arabs of Khaldeh who are supporters of⁵¹ the Future Movement.

These clashes have also been placed under the custody of the Lebanese judiciary and the army without final court decisions, indicating the existence of extrajudicial agreements through which the parties seek to secure gains.

(50) As Brigadier General Bassam Yassin, Head of the Negotiating Military-Technical Delegation.

(51) In August 2020 and August 2021, attempts at reconciliation among the region's multi-pronged people continued.



■ Armory and Missile warehouses

What is new in Hizballah's weapons storage is the Israeli side's promotion of weapons manufacturing or storage sites in the heart of Beirut's residential neighbourhoods, which the party denies.

In recent years, however, news of mysterious explosions has been circulating in several areas where the party is present in closed security zones, such as the towns of Ain Qana and Humin al-Fawqa in the south, and the town of Nabi Sheet in the Bekaa. This has been linked by reports and analysed by the media as something similar to the mysterious explosions in Iran.

It is said to have been targeted by an Israeli bombardment as security sites containing weapons and ammunition.

However, such claims have not been confirmed.

■ The "UNIFIL"

There are reports of attacks on the international emergency force (UNIFIL) in southern Lebanon by citizens (of course such persons are said to be from the grassroots of Hezbollah, most likely including party members).

These incidents have been repeated since international forces began their new tasks of monitoring the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)), which called for a complete cessation of hostilities in Lebanon after the July 2006 war.

Two incidents occurred in two weeks, between the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022, and a strong UNIFIL response was issued.⁵²

UNIFIL, which routinely patrols the area between the Litani River in the north and the Blue Line in the south, as part of its tasks, is accused of roaming private properties and taking photographs of residential neighbourhoods in southern villages. It is also doing so without the escort of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

For its part, UNIFIL considers the attacks targeting it as violations of Lebanese and international laws, and condemns "the actors who manipulate the population of the area to serve its purposes," referring to Hezbollah.

(52) On 22/12/2022, less than 24 hours after the departure of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, and on 4/1/2022.



There is increasing talk of a new phase of engagement with international forces in the south , as events and developments , including demarcation, the blockade and the emergence of new security and military equations, evolve.⁵³

■ Training Camps

On 13 November 2021, images of Hezbollah's military presence appeared in the Ayoun al-Siman area of Mount Lebanon, while media outlets stated that this deployment of Hezbollah elements in the area was a manoeuvre through a training camp established by the party for its members, and it was dismantled.

In April 2021, the Lebanese newspaper Al-Nahar revealed that Hezbollah was training Houthi cadres in its camps in the Bekaa and in the south of the country, and that official Lebanese and security authorities had been informed, but those concerned in the country did not pay any attention to this issue.

4. A. Political role

Hezbollah currently has two ministers in the Lebanese government (which has become the caretaker government after the parliamentary elections), namely, the Minister of Public Works and Transport, Ali Hameya, and the Minister of Labour, Mustafa Bayram. Most of the analyses say that the party 's access to the Ministry of Works is linked to its tight control of the border crossings, the Beirut seaport and the airport.

Although none of the sectarian groups or political parties has got a “nullifying third” of the government, which is eight ministers; there is unanimous agreement that the government will not be disrupted by the resignation of ministers belonging to a particular sect or party.

Hizballah and its allies were thus able to disrupt this Government without need to a nullifying third and without resorting to resignations,

(53) “Hezbollah surrounds UNIFIL: Obstructing the search and restricting its movement by public roads”, Al-Liwa 'newspaper, 14/01/2022:bit.ly/36X4qnu

but by linking attendance at hearings to firing Judge Tariq Bitar and crippling his influence,⁵⁴ amid reassurance by the Prime Minister that the hearings would not be held without their attendance.

In addition, Hezbollah has been the centre of political events through several developments, starting with the diplomatic crisis with the Gulf states, whether by statements made by Information Minister George Kardahi, and his support by Hezbollah for not submitting his resignation (despite his resignation in the end) and the persistence of the party and its supporters in insulting the GCC countries, especially through their media channels, to supporting the Yemeni Houthis, hosting a conference for the Bahraini opposition in Beirut, then seizing Captagon's shipments in Lebanon intended for export to the Gulf countries and other Arab countries, with Hezbollah being the main suspect. Add to that the ensuing Kuwaiti paper that the party considered to be unacceptable conditions for the Lebanese state linked to the party's activities.

The disagreement between Hezbollah's two main allies, the Amal Movement and the Free Patriotic Movement, also emerged in several files, the most important of which are the powers of the President of the Republic and the Elections and Appointments Law, and culminated in the presentation of the head of the Free Patriotic Movement, Gibran Basil, to develop the Mar Makhail Agreement of 2006 between the Movement and the Gibran's party, after he explicitly accused the "Shiite dichotomy" of their role in the current crisis in Lebanon, whether economic or political and diplomatic with the Gulf countries.

The party chose to stand by its Shia ally, Nabih Berri, provided that he would play the mediator or observer role would play the disagreement would not intensify between his two allies, especially because of the elections, as the disagreements would have a negative impact on all of them.

The issue of the demarcation of the border with the Israeli side is not lost on the party, given that Nasrallah has declared since the resumption of negotiations that he leaves it to the Lebanese State while he backs it.

(54) Hearings were suspended from 13 October 2021 until 15 January 2022, when they resumed after reassurance that the port investigation had been delayed for technical reasons linked to the appointment of a judge to replace those who had retired, and with a view to discussing the 2022 budget in order to negotiate with the International Monetary Fund.



In fact, Hizballah, like the other Lebanese parties involved in the demarcation, which have not yet agreed or disclosed their terms for negotiation, places its terms in the custody of the negotiators, especially the Lebanese Armed Forces.

Regarding American influence in Lebanon, Hezbollah seemed clear in the files that it could not, at least now, settle in its favour or according to its positions, because it is considered to be under the influence of the Americans, which are the institutions of the state and civil society.

5. Regional role

The regional role of Hezbollah is linked to Iran's policy, talks and agreements in the region automatically, whether with the Gulf states or the West, and the support of Iran's affiliated groups in the region, especially in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. It is also connected with the preservation of the gains achieved by Iran's axis in wars and battles in the region, as well as the dedication of hostility to the Gulf and the United States of America and the challenge of the sanctions imposed on it by the West. It; however, maintains less hostile positions towards Gulf countries such as Qatar and Oman, and Western countries such as France, for considerations related to the role of these countries in initiatives and mediation to reach political outlets that the party can accept in the future.



Yemen

The current role of Hezbollah in Yemen, according to the party, is giving military support and providing technical experts. It considers any accusations of its participation in the fighting as "trivial and is not worthy responding to"; at a time when reports talk about the party's role in training the Houthis and the entry of its fighters into Yemeni territory in a way similar to their presence in Syria and Iraq.

The party and its media tools do not hide their moral support of the Houthis, through the media and social networking sites, as well as taking positions towards Saudi Arabia and the UAE that sometimes get to calling for the boycott and condemnation of what they consider "massacres" of the coalition.



According to some reports, Hezbollah's role in Yemen has recently been linked to the party's leadership's pressure on the Houthis to avoid reaching a settlement with the Saudis before the fall of Marib, so that they can turn their victory into political gains, as this battle is of central importance to Iran and ⁵⁵ Hezbollah; and Nasrallah has mentioned it more than once in his speeches.



Syria

Hezbollah secures strategic support lines for the introduction of weapons through Syria,⁵⁶ as this entails the presence for storing its weapons stores therein.

According to reports, cited by Nasrallah, Hezbollah is deploying air defence systems in the Qalamoun Mountains northwest of Damascus, adjacent to the Lebanese Bekaa to counter Israeli air strikes in Syria and Lebanon, as well as to deter possible attacks on Iran or its oil tankers.

Hezbollah also has a role in coordinating with the Russian side on the ground and politically in Syria with regard to the political process, presidential elections, reconstruction, the economy, and the return of refugees.⁵⁷



Iraq

After the victory of the leader of the "Sadrist Current" Muqtada al-Sadr in November 2021 and winning a high majority (74 seats), in the Iraqi House of Representatives, a role for Hezbollah along with Iran emerged to pressure towards keeping the government that Sadr will form within the Shia House; specifically the forces of the coordination framework, given that the leader of the "Sadrist Current" enjoys extensive relations with the Arabian environment, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The party's role also came with the emergence of signs of Shia divisions and the need for mediations, including contacts with Hezbollah by Sheikh Mohammad Kothrani, who is in charge of leading Iranian armed affairs in Iraq,

(55) Ahmed Naji, "Beirut vs. Marib?", Malcolm Kerr-Carnegie Centre, 09/11/2021: bit.ly/3wQ95Cx

(56) "Hezbollah. Regional Power!", Trench Site, 1/10/2021: bit.ly/3ITZDK7

(57) Russia for Hezbollah: We want you to stay in Syria, Al-Akhbar newspaper, 06/04/2021: bit.ly/3wPZ5sU



and who together with the leader of Al-Quds Force, Major General Ismail Qaani, met Al-Sadr and Shia and Kurdish blocs.⁵⁸



Palestine

After the wave of Israeli attacks in the neighbourhoods of Jerusalem (Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhoods) and then the aggression on Gaza in May 2021 (the sword of Jerusalem), Nasrallah announced in a speech on 25 June 2021, on the occasion of the anniversary of the withdrawal of the Israeli occupation forces from Lebanon in 2000, a formula saying that the attack on Jerusalem and the holy places will lead to a regional war, and that the response to the Israeli attacks will not stop at the borders of the resistance in the Gaza Strip.



Gulf States

The Gulf states, on top Saudi Arabia, deal with Hezbollah as a terrorist party, while the Gulf deals with it on the basis of its influence in Lebanon and puts the removal of its fists from the state as a reform item and a condition for providing support.

On the other hand, Hezbollah views the Gulf as an Arab side that has normalized relations with Israel and the United States of America, and considers every initiative or position towards it as unacceptable dictates that affect the sovereignty of Lebanon.

According to Hizballah this has⁵⁹ been happening throughout the period that accompanied the economic and political crisis.

Hezbollah also continues to challenge and insult and attack the Gulf States for the war in Yemen.

Although the relationship with Qatar has been better, in 2021, for example, there were joint "Qatari-American" sanctions against networks supporting Hezbollah.⁶⁰

(58) «Hirak Qani and Kawtharani in Baghdad and Najaf: Sadr confirms his rejection of any role for the Maliki in the next government», Al- 'Arabi al-Jadid Newspaper, 17/01/2022: bit.ly/3JTVU7r

(59) Nasrallah talks about reconciliation with the Gulf and confronting Israel and the military capabilities of the UAE, Al-Jazeera website, 8/02/2022: bit.ly/35p3szX

(60) " Washington: US-Qatari Actions Against a Financial Network Supported by Hezbollah,"Anatolia Agency, 29/09/2021: bit.ly/370kpRz



■ Sanctions and the Terrorism List

Sanctions against Hezbollah are linked to the U.S. Treasury Department, which has intensified its sanctions against entities and individuals associated with the party in the past two years, and continue to this day, most recently in January 2022. Sanctions during the financial crisis included individuals allied with Hizballah in Lebanon; namely from the Free Patriotic Movement and Amal Movement. The terrorism Lists are linked to the classification of Hezbollah and its institutions in relation to the nations of the world, the latest of which was Australia, where on 24 November 2021 the military and political wings of the party were classified as a "terrorist organization".

Hezbollah considers American sanctions to be linked to the Party's political choices and to the axis to which it belongs.

The sanctions on its allies constitute a paper in which the party offers them gains inside Lebanon in return.

As for the terrorist Lists, Nasrallah's position on that, especially in his speech on 26 November 2021, was that they are related to the American dictates and developments in the region, and to the parliamentary elections in Lebanon.

These sanctions affect the party's financiers and supporters, who have interests with Western countries.

They also increase security and military pressure on the party and blockade its movements in the region and the world.

More ⁶¹ than anything else, they have negative repercussions on Lebanon in light of the decline in international assistance.

(61) "How Affected Is Hezbollah by International Sanctions and Terrorist Classification?", Independent Arabic, 1/12/2021: bit.ly/3tT3fP9

Third: Future scenarios

1. Local economic level

It was believed that the economic roles taken by Hizballah towards the economic crises during the past years will hold for just two years; and now the two years are over.

As such, the scenarios before the party regarding the economy are the ones that existed in the past: - either activating the Lebanese state to negotiate with the International Monetary Fund and implement the required reforms, which include controlling the crossings where the party itself is located, and fighting corruption, which the party chose to confront.

OR - heading east, which the party could not implement in the past period to be the alternative to Arab countries and Western international support, from which its popular base benefited.

This is in addition to the growing popular discontent with the party, whether among its opponents or those loyal to it.

The crisis affects not only food or living materials, but also hospitalization, energy, banking, education, in addition to all sectors and public utilities.

A challenge, which was not of the same intensity, is also implementing the conditions of the Gulf countries and improving relations with them, given that the Lebanese economy does not only wait for the loans of the IMF, but also for the Gulf funds and investments, as well as the unification of the exchange rate and the solution of the banking crisis.

The foregoing adds another scenario before Hezbollah, which is the position of the Lebanese government and the rest of the political parties in the country, in light of the existence of full-fledged constitutional institutions, in the face of economic and financial challenges,



as the party plays the role of an observer and makes statements and positions commensurate with its positions towards the Gulf and the international community, as it considers that this issue falls within the influence of those whom it considers to be its enemies (the Americans, Saudi Arabia and their allies in Lebanon).

2. Local political level

The party's political scenarios revolve around the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections, as the party acknowledges that it is a juncture on which its enemies are betting abroad and at home.

Therefore, it is related to its alliances, as these alliances cannot continue in the same form since the announcement of the document of understanding with the Free National Movement in 2006, and as in the 2018 elections, in light of the dispute between "Amal" and "Free Current" on the one hand, and in the absence of the leader of "Future" Saad Hariri from the political arena on the other hand.

It should be noted that Hezbollah is engaged in political action with a new rival in Lebanon, namely civil society and the forces of change, which it refers to as «NGOs» and tries to demonize them without distinguishing between those revolutionary ones or those supported by the Arabs and the West.

3. Local military and security level

The issue of border demarcation is considered a political and economic issue at the same time.

It is also related to the level of security, as negotiations are taking place with the Israeli side with the presence of the Lebanese army and the presence of the American side as an intermediary.

The media close to Hizballah warn about a scenario to would lead to normalization with the enemy; especially with the presence of companies investing in water, which will be joint enterprises between Israel and Lebanon.

Three other recent security scenarios have been presented,



namely, a war between Hezbollah and Israel, due to ⁶² the regional ⁶³ escalation (we mentioned the Gulf paper for the return of relations with Lebanon, UN Resolutions 1559 and 1701 on Hezbollah's weapons), a war in Palestinian camps, especially in light of the tensions and estrangement between Fatah and Hamas and the clashes between them after the explosion in the Northern Tower camp in the south, or the activation of the file of youth upholstery networks in ISIS, especially in the ⁶⁴ north, and fighting ISIS, which was the basis for Hezbollah's military intervention in Syria.

4. Regional and international role

Hezbollah says: Its regional role is at the service of Lebanon, and therefore, given the regional and international changes, it can adapt this role, as it is in Lebanon's interest.

Among the variables are those related to the Arab rapprochement with the Syrian regime and the attempt to encircle the Iranian influence and thus the influence of Hezbollah in Syria. The other is the Arab rapprochement with Turkey in the recent period, which is a step that bothers Iran, especially after the consolidation in 2021 of relations between Tehran and Ankara.

Such developments have positive political and economic impact on Iraq, Syria and Lebanon (there was talk about a role for Turkey in Lebanon instead of the Saudi role). Added to all this is the forthcoming "Saudi-Iranian" settlement and nuclear agreement.

The regional role of Hizballah will be shaped by the Iranian role in the region. The scenarios revolve around the attempt of the major regional powers to limit the party's role in Syria and Iraq, specifically on the ground, or to downsize it in the countries of the region, and limit it to Syria.⁶⁵

(62) Amal Shehada: "This is Israel's plan towards' Hezbollah 'and Iran in Syria," Independent, Arabic, 09/01/2022: bit.ly/3ul6zeS

(63) Hassan Lafi, "A confrontation between Hezbollah and 'Israel ' in 2022 Is this possible?" , Al-Mayadeen Channel website , 28/12/2021: bit.ly/3IOLC77

(64) "ISIS Cells" in Lebanon... Truth or Phantom of Security? ", Al-Nahar Newspaper, 09/01/2022: bit.ly/381Pk0r

(65) Suhaib Jawhar, "Tehran, Ankara and the stage of a potential clash. Hezbollah is on the front line. ", « Arab Post», 08/02/2022: bit.ly/3836n2a

Conclusion

Between escalation scenarios and settlement scenarios, the next period seems to be dominated by settlements, as the previous epoch of events is saturated by escalation and created circumstances that led to rapprochement between the axes and the active regional states.

Hizballah has contributed significantly to reaching this reality through its militant role in the region and its political role, which has gone beyond military battles to the extent that it has intervened in the formation of Governments and in the political process in the countries in which it has a presence.

Major powers, along with regional states, want to put an end to issues such as the nuclear agreement at the international level, normalization with Israel, reconciliation between regional states, and the delineation of the Lebanese maritime borders (more than solving the Lebanese crisis as a whole).

At the same time, Hezbollah understands the efforts exerted to sanction it and limit its role in the region, as it has taken its decision on such bases to stand firm for the last two years and to complicate its demands and escalate its conditions against those it has specified as enemies in order to achieve certain gains in the next phase.

Thus, the scenario closest to realization has begun; especially with Hizballah's return to attending the Lebanese Government sessions, after crippling its activities for some time.

It had completed the budget and lately did the parliamentary elections. This has economic repercussions that are supposed to be positive for the authority, including Hezbollah, but it has a negative impact on citizens, including the popular base of the party; and as was the case with the discussion of the budget, where Hezbollah evaded its approval, by accusing the head of the government of releasing it in a state of chaos.



This performance by Hizballah will be the pattern of behaviour in other cases that need to be addressed; especially when the international community expects a serious addressing of the economic situation.

As for the war with Israel or the confrontation with ISIS cells in Lebanon, it is currently unlikely, given that the situation has become different from the one that prevailed before Hezbollah's interference in Syria and before the regression of ISIS role in the region.

The idea of war; however, can be a pressuring card in the details of the most important files at the moment, on top of which is the delineation of the maritime borders and the economic crisis.

As for Hezbollah's attitudes and behaviours towards the Arab countries, it is expected to continue as long as the war in Yemen continues, and the normalization track continues.

There will be however a distinction between the positions of Hezbollah and those of the Lebanese state. Such a situation will have a positive impact on Lebanon and other parties in the country. The role of such parties cannot be overlooked in conjunction with the role of Hezbollah, as they seek to bring things back to what they were before the beginning of the collapse.



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info@dimensionscenter.net