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Asymmetric Warfare Through the Communication of Threats: Hezbollah, Israel, and the Discourse of Deterrence

By

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Asymmetric Warfare Through the Communication of Threats: Hezbollah, Israel, and the Discourse of Deterrence

Miguel Mendelek

ABSTRACT

For more than thirteen years now, Hezbollah and Israel, against all the odds of asymmetric deterrence, have been maintaining a relatively stable deterrence status quo. After the deployment of Katyusha rockets in 1992, and starting in 1996, Hezbollah established with Israel a set of rules, commonly known as, the "rules of the game", to mediate their military confrontation on the lines of deterrence. Importantly, throughout the evolution of the deterrence relationship between both parties, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah's discourse and speeches have become a centerpiece to assess Hezbollah's military capability, its will, and its commitment to deter Israel. After Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, and specifically during the 2006 war, Nasrallah, as the Secretary General of Hezbollah, further bolstered the party's discourse of deterrence vis a vis Israel. In this context, this research work builds primarily on the analysis of Nasrallah's speeches and statements that focus on deterrence, as translated exclusively in this thesis from Arabic to English, starting in 1992. This thesis evaluates an understudied case, asymmetric deterrence in the Middle East, by testing the theory of deterrence on Hezbollah and Israel. Likewise, it analyzes the translatability, thus, the efficacy of Hezbollah's exponential growth in military capability, as reflected in Nasrallah's and the party's discourse of deterrence between the years 1992 and 2019.

Keywords: Deterrence, Asymmetry, Discourse, Military Capability, Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, Israel.

Dedication Page

To my loving parents, Jean Claude and Chantal, and my brother, Cyril

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Chapter One

Introduction

Since 1982, Hezbollah has immersed itself in the perils of confronting a strong military power in the Middle East, Israel. Amidst these perils, Hezbollah was yet able to force Israel into submission and withdrawal twice, as in the years 2000 and 2006, notwithstanding the Israeli domestic pressures against its operations in Lebanon. However, direct confrontation with Israel proved costly enough, especially in 2006. Resultantly, Hezbollah, whose ability to absolutely defeat the entity of Israel remains surreal due to asymmetries, saw in deterrence an alternative win for its party. In great part to the strategy of deterrence, utilized by Hezbollah's ability to strike within Israel since 1992, Hezbollah's rockets became a force multiplier for the party's ability to deter. As a result, while asymmetries sustained, Hezbollah's deterrence rationale, based on rockets, has put Israeli security at stake, thus exploiting asymmetry to its uttermost advantage. Thereby, how did Hezbollah, the weak actor in the equation, invest in asymmetric deterrence to survive?

In the fields of security studies and international relations, "rational deterrence" is an essentially persuasive mechanism based on the ability of one actor to persuade its respective rival actor that "the costs and/or risks of a given course of action he might take outweigh its benefits"[1]. In fact, the concept of deterrence has been a hotbed topic for scholars of security

[1] George, Alexander L., and Richard Smoke. *Deterrence in American foreign policy: Theory and practice*. Columbia University Press, 1974.

studies to understand the controversial deterrent role of conventional weaponry, like nuclear weapons, especially by the advent of the cold war, and even later. Interestingly, the concept of deterrence, like nuclear deterrence, its success and its failure, has dominated greatly the schools of thought of the West for more than four decades now, especially that the US and its European allies were in the midst of their confrontation against the USSR.[2]

To many scholars, like Robert Jervis, deterrence theory has been one of the most influential schools of thought,[3] it being at the heart of the realists' perceptions of the world order, based on the notion of realpolitik, i.e. power politics and the anarchic world structure, thus war and deterrence.[4] At minimum, the interest in deterrence has primarily emanated from the strategic and rational challenges tied to the ability of establishing successful deterrence between the actors in question.

Nevertheless, the concept of deterrence inherently holds a multitude of connotations tied to a number of avenues including psychology, rational decision making and communication one hand, and a deterrent military capability on the other. Resultantly, deterrence has become a multilevel phenomenon to understand in theory like in practice. At minimum, war is more likely to erupt when deterrence fails and vice versa. On these lines, and as explained next, two conceptions, deterrence and war have long characterized some of the most potent options which actors, state or nonstate, nuclear or not, have had to pursue in an environment of open conflict.

[2] Dougherty, James E., and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff. *Contending theories of international relations*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1971.
[3] Jervis, Robert. "Deterrence theory revisited." *World Pol.* 31 (1978): 289.
[4] Donnelly, Jack. *Realism and international relations*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Although traditionally, and especially by the advent of the cold war, the concept of deterrence has been mostly tied to nuclear state actors per se, the rise of proxy nonstate armed groups, along with the evolution of war strategies among states themselves, has unfolded the concept of deterrence to further encompass the analysis of nonstate actors greatly. Indeed, as James Doughetry and Robert Plaftzgraff put it, "the nuclear weapons component is not essential to the definition."[5] Thus, while traditional deterrence looked into nuclear states while ignored the role of conventional weaponry and their contribution to deterrence, the more contemporary study of deterrence now encompasses the analysis of the role of conventional weapons in deterrence, whether between essentially symmetric actors, i.e. between state actors, or asymmetric actors, i.e. between a state actor and a nonstate actor.[6]

Why study asymmetric deterrence? Actually, the fragile calculus of deterrence, it being, for a long period of time, studied in a symmetric fashion, i.e. happening between nuclear state actors per se, requires a deeper understanding of its components between asymmetric actors, an approach which has been undermined by the respective literature. Indeed, asymmetrical wars have today become "the new prototype of Middle East conflict", as Marvin Kalb and Carol Saivetz interestingly put it.[7] For instance, an array of nonstate actors (e.g. Hamas, Fatah, the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and Hezbollah), the identities of which have been debated on

[5] Dougherty, James E., and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff. *Contending theories of international relations*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1971.
[6] Bowen, Wyn Q. "Deterrence and asymmetry: Non-state actors and mass casualty terrorism." *Contemporary Security Policy* 25, no. 1 (2004): 54-70; Knopf, Jeffrey W. "The fourth wave in deterrence research." *Contemporary Security Policy* 31, no. 1 (2010): 1-33; Paul, Thazha V., Patrick M. Morgan, and James J. Wirtz, eds. *Complex deterrence: Strategy in the global age*. University of Chicago Press, 2009.
[7] Kalb, Marvin, and Carol Saivetz. "The Israeli—Hezbollah war of 2006: The media as a weapon in asymmetrical conflict." *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 12, no. 3 (2007): 43-66.

the lines of terrorism or resistance, have long been engaging in open conflicts with respectives state actors.

Nevertheless, successful asymmetric deterrence requires that essentially military disproportionate and value-different actors create a mutually acknowledged and credible continuum for understanding the shared values and capabilities. Thereby, amid this arduous obstacle, and while symmetric deterrence treats both actors as essentially parallel in military capability and normative principles, asymmetric deterrence holds the inherent challenges of evaluating how essentially disproportionate actors deter amid rising military and cognitive impediments.[8]

Thereby, the concept of asymmetric deterrence fueled controversy on the extent to which nonstate violent actors are deterrable. However, scholars have developed a number of arguments to claim that nonstate actors can still be deterred.[9] Hence, building on the challenging and atypical nature of asymmetric deterrence, this thesis, through the case study of Hezbollah, demonstrates how asymmetric deterrence is achievable between nonstate actors. Indeed, out of many nonstate and state actors engaging in ongoing conflicts in the world, on the lines of war and deterrence, understanding Hezbollah's distinguished ability in establishing enduring

[8] Wenger, Andreas, and Alex Wilner, eds. *Deterring terrorism: Theory and practice*. Stanford University Press, 2012.
[9] Wilner, Alex S. *Deterring Rational Fanatics*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015; Wilner, Alex. "Fencing in warfare: Threats, punishment, and intra-war deterrence in counterterrorism." *Security studies* 22, no. 4 (2013): 740-772; Trager, Robert F., and Dessislava P. Zagorcheva. "Deterring terrorism: It can be done." *International Security* 30, no. 3 (2006): 87-123.

deterrence against a military supreme state actor in the Middle East, i.e. Israel, remains of central importance.

So, why study the case of Hezbollah? First, very rarely did any two asymmetrical actors, like Hezbollah and Israel, successfully maintain a relative status quo of deterrence for more than thirteen years now. Truly, this reality, which has been understudied in the literature on both actors, has revolutionized the study of deterrence and asymmetry. Really, it proved that deterrence, as an alternative to war, is achievable, to a considerable extent, between asymmetric actors. At minimum, stable and successful deterrence has proven to be a lesson learned over a long period of time.[10] Second, and as this thesis will demonstrate throughout, while deterrence between symmetric actors usually feeds the interests of both actors in question, in asymmetric conflicts however, deterrence is nevertheless established in favor of the weaker actor, i.e. Hezbollah. Indeed, the case of the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict illustrates well how nonstate actors amass weapons to deter, rather than confront inconclusive battles, thus survive and sustain over time.

Upon close observations, one of the most potent deterrence strategies used by Hezbollah generally, and Hassan Nasrallah particularly, notwithstanding other vocal voices in the organization, has been the communication of threats. Actually, since his election as Secretary General in 1992, Nasrallah has become the prime spokesman of Hezbollah vis a vis Israel, and essentially through media TV, thus making of his speeches of deterrence a centerpiece of Hezbollah's deterrence calculus.

[10] Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to deter: deterrence failure and success in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, 2006–16." *International security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-196.

Therefore, across four main chapters, this thesis explains how Nasrallah has been able to favorably converge, over time, between the military aspect of deterrence (especially with the deployment of Katyusha rockets by 1992) on one hand, and its fundamental psychological and communicational edge on the other. Thus, this thesis demonstrates how Hezbollah, through Nasrallah, between 1992 (the beginning of a transformational military development) and 2019 inclusive (a time period of thirteen years of relative quiet and deterrence stability after 2006) has been able to instate a balance of deterrence to the party's uttermost advantage. Truly, this deterrence posture was solidly instated in great part to Nasrallah's sound communication of credible threats.

In this fashion, the thesis answers the following overarching research question: *"how has Hezbollah, the nonstate actor in the asymmetric warfare with Israel, been able to establish a relatively permanent state of deterrence through discourse, against Israel, over time?"* Thereby, on the lines of understanding the correlation between the three main conceptions posed in the question, i.e. asymmetry, deterrence and discourse, the thesis's different sub-arguments build on the following main premise.

First and foremost, *"Nasrallah's threats, which converged with the idea of credibility and heightened military capabilities, especially after 2006, have in great part contributed to establishing deterrence against Israel."* Indeed, on the lines of transforming verbal threats into credible endeavors through practice, Nasrallah was able to triumph deterrence over time. Hence, by embracing this prime argument, the four case study chapters of the thesis will address

Hezbollah, Israel and deterrence, from the point of view of understanding Nasrallah's role in the effective communication of deterrent threats over time.

Throughout the four case study chapters, the object of this thesis is to understand, how, over a considerable period of time, Hezbollah and Israel have been able to gradually establish a deterrence system to govern their asymmetric relationship. How? First, the thesis depicts the ways through which Nasrallah incrementally embraced a discourse of deterrence, thus understanding its pitfalls and its advancements. Second, the thesis further analyzes how this discourse has itself helped in establishing a relatively solid and successful deterrence posture for Hezbollah, through primarily the issuance of threats, especially after the 2006 war. Third, and based on the convergence between discourse on one hand, and military capability on the other, the thesis assesses the evolution of Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence. Below is an outline of the thesis per chapter.

The thesis will proceed in the following manner. Chapter 2 will first review the literature on rational deterrence theory, its roots and developments, before analyzing its relation to the case study of the thesis, notwithstanding gaps. Nevertheless, the chapter will set the methodological grounds, i.e. scope and type of analysis, for defining the approach to the case study, thus deterrence, asymmetry and the communication of threats.

Chapter 3 titled "The Shaping of Deterrence: Nasrallah's Deterrence Discourse and the "Rules of the Game"" will analyze Nasrallah's very first discourse of deterrence towards Israel between the years 1992 and 2000. Actually, this chapter will look into the earliest

implementations of the "rules of the game" i.e. the deterrence paradigm between Hezbollah and Israel. As well, this chapter discusses how these rules have revolutionized the conflict between both actors from direct confrontation to deterrence.

Chapter 4 titled "Deterrence in Transition: Nasrallah's Shy Discourse of Deterrence After Israeli Withdrawal" will address the phase between 2000-2006 where Nasrallah's discourse failed at intercepting with the basic requirements of deterrence, thus leaving room for misinterpretations and perceptions of incredibility. Resultantly, Nasrallah, who abstained from issuing explicit threats to Israel, crumbled Hezbollah's deterrence posture, especially along the years leading to 2006.

Chapter 5 titled "Deterrence at War: Nasrallah Bolstering the Discourse of Deterrence by Punishment" will analyze deterrence during the war days in 2006. The analysis takes place on the lines of understanding Nasrallah's embracement of a heated discourse of deterrence by punishment for the first time in years. In this fashion, Nasrallah was able to translate verbal threats into military practice, thus successfully converging between credibility and communication.

Chapter 6 titled "Deterrence Post 2006: Nasrallah Embraces the Discourse of Deterrence by Punishment" will look into the post war years to demonstrate Nasrallah's embracement of a highly credible rhetoric of general deterrence by punishment. In this fashion, the chapter analyzes the contribution of Nasrallah's rhetoric in establishing more than thirteen-years of relative quiet across the borders, despite the renewal of sporadic clashes by the advent of the

Syria crisis. At minimum, Nasrallah, since 2006, triumphed deterrence, in great part to a discourse of credible and resolute threats by punishment.

Lastly, chapter 7 will restate the main argument of the case study analysis with respect to the theoretical background presented in the literature review and across the different chapters. Hence, in this fashion, the chapter demonstrates the significance of the findings and how well deterrence between both parties gradually abided to its main pillars over time.

As the analysis suggests, although periodic rounds of clashes have infringed upon the relative stability of deterrence over the years, reestablishing deterrence has been Hezbollah's focal interest to avoid unsustainable physical and moral damages, not only during times of relative peace, but in times of confrontations as well. Therefore, understanding Hezbollah's deterrence rationale is important for both theory and practice, especially that few works have addressed the role of the nonstate actor in the equation of deterrence.[11] Hence, the following chapter explores the theoretical prerequisites for deterrence, the works on Hezbollah and Israel, and the former in particular, before setting the ground for the methodological approach of the thesis.

[11] Samaan, Jean-Loup. *From war to deterrence? Israel-Hezbollah conflict since 2006*. ARMY WAR COLLEGE CARLISLE BARRACKS PA STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, 2014; Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to deter: deterrence failure and success in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, 2006–16." *International security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-196.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

After introducing the thesis, this chapter sets the main pillars for the analytical approach adopted in the paper. Before delving deeper into the four-case study chapter, chapter 2 poses the research questions to which the following chapters provide answers. Then, the chapter reviews the contribution of the most prominent scholars on the theory of deterrence, the communication of threats and the case of Hezbollah and Israel.

2.2 Research Questions

The thesis answers the following major research question *"how has Hezbollah, a nonstate actor in the asymmetric warfare with Israel, been able to establish a relatively permanent state of deterrence through discourse, against Israel, over time?"* As this research is concerned with understanding the establishment of deterrence by a nonstate actor, i.e. Hezbollah, in asymmetrical conflicts, and through the communication of threats, the following subsidiary questions are derived.

Research Question 1: Is deterrence viable in asymmetrical conflicts?

Research Question 2: Through which means does a nonstate actor establish threats effectively and credibly?

Research Question 3: How does the state actor interpret and respond to these threats per se?

Research Question 4: How does a nonstate actor establish deterrence in times of relative peace and war?

Research Question 5: How is deterrence established psychologically and strategically?

The importance of these questions lies in their ability to first analyze a marginalized and understudied relationship of deterrence between a state and a nonstate actor. Second, these questions will analyze the role of rhetoric and the communication of threats in deterrence from the viewpoint of the nonstate actor, Hezbollah. Third, they account for the strategic and psychological ends of deterrence, best vested through communication. In sum, after looking at these research questions, the literature review below discusses the concepts of deterrence, asymmetry and communication, before looking at the case of Hezbollah and Israel specifically.

2.3 Literature Review

2.3.1 Introduction

"Rational Deterrence Theory", one of the most consumed conceptions in traditional security studies, has yet remained a core interest for many scholars as a primarily fluid strategy prone to errors and controversy. In fact, decomposing the "theory of rational deterrence" suggests that its deepest roots stem from the field of criminology and stretches to engulf the arena of decision making in the fields of security studies and international relations, thus war and deterrence. Therefore, to understand better the origins and developments of the theory of rational deterrence,

the following review will proceed by the following. First, it will shed light on the roots of deterrence which stem from the field of criminology. Second, the review proceeds by underpinning the definition for deterrence, and its development into three waves by the advent of the cold war. Third, after discussing the conventional approach to deterrence, i.e. symmetry, the chapter reviews the contribution of authors on asymmetric deterrence post the cold war as part of the fourth wave of deterrence. Fourth, the review discusses the inherent challenges in threat communication between asymmetric actors. Lastly, the chapter analyzes the scholarship on the case study of the research, its limitations and the contribution of the thesis.

2.3.2 The Roots of Deterrence

In fact, the concept of "utilitarianism" in decision making, as developed by the early utilitarian philosophers Jeremy Bentham and Cesare Beccaria in the late 18th century, still largely illustrates the comportment of the actors involved in the game of deterrence, not only in the field of criminology, but as well in the field of international relations.[12] Building on the following, Bentham's utilitarian approach stresses on the assumption that the decision maker's rationality is motivated towards loss aversion and reward increase greatly. Interestingly, to talk about deterrence, Bentham, back in the days, resorted to the term "determent", as a precursor for deterrence today, and defines it as "the action or fact of deterring…"[13]

Similarly, and in the field of criminology as well, thinkers like Derek Cornish and Ronald Clark developed the "theory of rational choice" in 1986, of which deterrence is deduced as well.

[12] Smelser, Neil J., and Paul B. Baltes, eds. *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences*. Vol. 11. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2001.
[13] Freedman, Lawrence. *Deterrence*. Polity, 2004.

Its number one premise states that individuals weigh rationally costs and benefits when making a decision. With that said, how does deterrence emanate from "utilitarianism" and from "rational choice theory"? In reality, Beccaria and Bentham fairly converge between both conceptions and underpin three components of deterrence in any decision-making process. They include the following: "increasing the (1) severity, (2) certainty and (3) celerity of legal punishment"[14]. Actually, the three elements are aimed at deterring the criminal from committing crime. Thus, at minimum, the different approaches all stress the rationale of winning over losing in any decision-making mechanism.

When translated to the field of international relations, deterrence is best understood as a utilitarian option. Truly, deterrence aims at deterring the offensive actor from pursuing undesirable action through a number of means, on top of which is the communication of threats. Thereby, deterrence, in essence, builds on the following rational choice variables: a tradeoff between costs and benefits in international relations, like in criminology. Hence, by understanding the roots of the concept of deterrence, this chapter proceeds by reviewing the literature on the latter concept, yet in the field of international relations.

2.3.3 The Three Waves of Deterrence

To begin with, prominent authors like Jervis have identified three distinct waves of deterrence in international relations, not to forget a fourth wave raised by other scholars, underpinning asymmetry, and elaborated upon later. The first wave (>1950's) rose in the earliest years of the nuclear era and was short-lived. To Jervis, this wave was but a quick reaction to the

[14] Smelser, Neil J., and Paul B. Baltes, eds. *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences*. Vol. 11. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2001.

development of a new phenomenon, i.e. nuclear weapons. Thus, it remained premature, theoretically void, and uncapable of deciphering the repercussions of such advancements. At minimum, it was yet too early to assess the contribution of relatively unconventional weaponry to deterrence.[15]

The second wave (1950's-1970's), to Jervis, crystalized the theoretical grounds of deterrence where its paradoxical nature, in a bipolar world, was disclosed based on the following premise: enhancing self-security by threatening to harm adversaries rather than by protecting oneself. For example, unanswered questions from the first wave like "if nuclear war could not be fought, how could it be threatened?"[16] were addressed. Thus, at minimum, the second wave began exploring the theoretical grounds of deterrence.[17]

However, the third wave researchers were critical enough about the approach adopted in the second wave. These scholars argue that the analysis adopted in the second wave made of deterrence more of a "conventional wisdom", thus highly theoretical without empirical and practical evidencing. Thereby, the third wave (>1970's) made clear distinctions between compelling for example, and deterrence. As well, the third wave studied, through concrete analyses, and not abstract connotations of states A and B, how states in a bipolar world pursue different means to change the behavior of other states in its favor.[18]

2.3.4 The Definition of Deterrence

[15] Jervis, Robert. "Deterrence theory revisited." *World Politics* 31, no. 2 (1979): 289-324.
[16] Freedman, Lawrence. *Deterrence*. Polity, 2004.
[17] Jervis, Robert. "Deterrence theory revisited." *World Politics* 31, no. 2 (1979): 289-324.
[18] Jervis, 301.

In short, by converging the earliest works on rationality and deterrence, combined to the three waves elaborated upon above, several prominent authors have provided clear-cut definitions for the concept of deterrence. First, George Alexander and Richard Smoke, through an elementary Grosso Modo definition, argue that deterrence, as a persuasive mechanism in international relations, lies on the ability of an actor to persuade its respective rival actor that "the costs and/or risks of a given course of action he might take outweigh its benefits."[19]

Second, similarly to Alexander and Smoke, Ned Lebow and Janice Stein define deterrence as ways in which "defenders can use threats to increase leaders' calculations of the likely costs of a challenge."[20] Nevertheless, they resort to the metaphor, "I think therefore I deter" to highlight the centrality of rationality in decision making. At minimum, the common denominator for both definitions underpins the elements of "risks" and "costs" in assessing the viability of deterrence.

Nevertheless, building on these risks and costs themselves, and by taking this theory to a higher level of scrutiny, Patrick Morgan coins a terminology he calls "rational irrationality."[21] Actually, this paradox acknowledges uncertainty and uncalculated costs whenever rational deterrence theory calls decision makers for retaliation. Likewise, Christopher Achen and Duncan Snidal do recognize failures in the theory itself as they regard it to be "logically compelling" yet "empirically deficient."[22] Put differently, rational deterrence works best in theory rather than in practice. Thus, building on these two approaches, rational deterrence theory, aside its potential

[19] George, Alexander L., and Richard Smoke. *Deterrence in American foreign policy: Theory and practice*. Columbia University Press, 1974.
[20] Lebow, Richard Ned, and Janice Gross Stein. "Rational deterrence theory: I think, therefore I deter." *World politics* 41, no. 2 (1989): 208-224.
[21] Morgan, Patrick M. *Deterrence: A conceptual analysis*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1977.
[22] Achen, Christopher H., and Duncan Snidal. "Rational deterrence theory and comparative case studies." *World politics* 41, no. 2 (1989): 143-169.

cognitive failures, proves to be a psychological battle best understood in its absence. Indeed, when irrationality meets rationality, as per Morgan's apt formulation, failure, thus war, makes deterrence recognizable.

2.3.5 The Symmetric Approach to Deterrence

In fact, evidence suggests that most authors have long been preoccupied with the conventional approach to the theory of deterrence where both parties involved in this game are first, symmetric and second, nuclear state actors per se. This traditional analysis of "nuclear deterrence" has epitomized during the cold war era. For instance, Robert Powell has investigated the equation of threat credibility and limited retaliation with respect to nuclear weapons and the likelihood of deterrence success.[23] Similarly, Lebow and Stein have studied the different deterrence strategies during the cold war era between the US and the USSR. In this vein, Lebow and Stein sought to understand if nuclear deterrence, thus mutually assured destruction, has really prevented the eruption of a third world war.[24]

Thus, these two works, out of many on cold war conventional nuclear deterrence, illustrate the third wave of deterrence studies by complementing theory with case studies. Nevertheless, despite the preoccupation of authors with nuclear and symmetric deterrence, the latter and warfare have likewise become largely asymmetrical, especially after the demise of the bipolar world as explained next.

2.3.6 The Asymmetric Approach to Deterrence

[23] Powell, Robert. *Nuclear deterrence theory: The search for credibility*. Cambridge University Press, 1990.
[24] Lebow, Richard Ned, and Janice Gross Stein. "Deterrence and the Cold War." *Political Science Quarterly* 110, no. 2 (1995): 157-181.

In general terms, and on the earliest works on asymmetry, Morgan, for instance, has argued that deterrence is always asymmetric when "one side is seriously considering an attack while the other is mounting a threat to prevent it."[25] Actually, in this definition, like in most early works during and post the cold war, most have tied asymmetry to state actors, yet not necessarily nuclear. Put differently, authors like Barry Wolf have argued that asymmetric deterrence does involve state actors, yet of which are weak non-nuclear states against powerful nuclear states.[26] Yet, a major non-conventional contribution to the scholarship on asymmetric deterrence has been Paul Thazha, Morgan and James Wirtz's approach. In fact, they coin the term "complex deterrence" to denote deterrence beyond the cold war and symmetry.[27]

For instance, Emanuel Adler adopts a social constructivist approach to argue that nonstate actors, unlike state actors, are less likely to be deterred.[28] As he suggests, asymmetry, knowing that the rules of the game differ greatly between state and nonstate actors, further enshrines the normative gap, thus leading to complicated communication and resultantly, a volatile state of deterrence. Nevertheless, along the lines of this asymmetric gap, Wyn Bowen divides asymmetric deterrence into three categories.[29] These categories highlight the discrepancy between the state and the nonstate actor based on the following criteria: (1) "relative balance of interest", (2) "potential existence of political, economic, social and cultural dissimilarities", (3)

[25] Morgan, Patrick M. *Deterrence: A conceptual analysis*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1977.
[26] Wolf, Barry. *When the weak attack the strong: Failures of deterrence*. No. RAND-N-3261-A. RAND CORP SANTA MONICA CA, 1991.
[27] Paul, Thazha V., Patrick M. Morgan, and James J. Wirtz, eds. *Complex deterrence: Strategy in the global age*. University of Chicago Press, 2009.
[28] Thaza, Morgan & Wirtz, p.87
[29] Bowen, Wyn Q. "Deterrence and asymmetry: Non-state actors and mass casualty terrorism." *Contemporary Security Policy* 25, no. 1 (2004): 54-70.

"growing technological gap in conventional military capabilities". Thus, along these three elements, state and nonstate actors struggle to achieve deterrence.

Evidence from respective works has suggested that the overwhelming literature on asymmetric warfare exclusively attributes one of the actors to being essentially "terrorist" in nature, while the other actor a state per se. For example, Andreas Wenger and Alex Wilner, agree on the difficulties associated with deterrence when a nonstate actor is actively involved.[30] On these lines, Stein argues that deterring terrorism is "not impossible in theory", but is "exceedingly difficult" in practice.[31] In fact, Stein attributes difficulties in deterrence to communication problems, differences in strategic culture, structural uncertainties, and inabilities associated with proper threat identification.

However, beyond the comprehensive agreement associated with difficulties in deterring non state actors, especially terrorist organizations, Robert Trager and Dessislava Zagorcheva claim that deterring terrorism is, yet possible and can still be achieved. They refute arguments claiming that terrorists are "irrational" actors and do not fear punishment. As they suggest, terrorist-state relations are not a zero-sum game, as claimed by many scholars. As well, states have the capability of influencing the political strategies of terrorist organizations to a reasonable extent.[32] On these same lines, Jeremy Ginges has explored the merits of what she coins as "denial strategies" and "reintegrative punishment strategies" to effectively deter terrorists.[33] Likewise,

[30] Wenger, Andreas, and Alex Wilner, eds. *Deterring terrorism: Theory and practice*. Stanford University Press, 2012.
[31] Wilner & Wenger, 59.
[32] Trager, Robert F., and Dessislava P. Zagorcheva. "Deterring terrorism: It can be done." *International Security* 30, no. 3 (2006): 87-123.
[33] Ginges, Jeremy. "Deterring the terrorist: A psychological evaluation of different strategies for deterring terrorism." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no. 1 (1997): 170-185.

Alex Wilner, in his contributions on asymmetric deterrence, claims that the strategy of "targeted killings", threats by punishment and intra war deterrence are effective in deterring terrorism.[34] Thus, terrorists are deterrable.

As illustrated by now, the literature on asymmetry complicates deterrence beyond conventionality as in the era of the cold war. Instead of a traditional approach, the fourth wave of deterrence, as per Jeffrey Knopf's terminology, suggests a reexamination of the concept vis a vis an unconventional and asymmetrical actor: terrorism, especially after 9/11.[35] Indeed, Knopf's "fourth wave" of deterrence is an examination of the latter concept, as posed by the above works, beyond symmetry and strict nuclear considerations. Really, as Knopf argues, amid growing and evolving threats in a changing world context, especially by the demise of the bipolar world, deterrence remains a choice, yet complex and arduous to achieve. However, deterrence is a viable strategy to pursue by state actors against rogue states or nonstate actors, whether nuclear or not.

2.3.7 The Communication of Threats Between Asymmetric Actors

As posed above, the proper communication of threats, between two essentially asymmetric actors, amid salient normative, military and strategic gaps, is a major impediment towards the realization of deterrence stability. Nevertheless, discursive deterrence, on the lines of which threats are communicated, is in essence a "psychological exercise", as Jervis, Lebow and Stein

[34] Wilner, Alex S. *Deterring Rational Fanatics*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015; Wilner, Alex. "Fencing in warfare: Threats, punishment, and intra-war deterrence in counterterrorism." *Security studies* 22, no. 4 (2013): 740-772

[35] Knopf, Jeffrey W. "The fourth wave in deterrence research." *Contemporary Security Policy* 31, no. 1 (2010): 1-33.

argue.[36] On these lines, Lebow holds that deterrence strategies are psychological conflict management tools to defeat potent threats, yet often prone to perceptual failures.[37] Truly, in this analytically exhausting exercise, threats do lie at the heart of deterrence, while its clear and unambiguous communication via appropriate channels only contributes to the success of a deterrent strategy. At minimum, these threats, which are issued by the "challenger" in the equation of deterrence, as Frank Zagare and Marc Kilgour argue, should be capable, thus damaging.[38]

Nonetheless, according to Jervis, these capable threats are in fact resonating signals. In turn, he best defines signals as "…statements or actions the meanings of which are established by tacit or explicit understandings among the actors."[39] Yet, for signals to create a "threatening" image or "credible" reputation of an actor, Barry Nalebuff suggests that reputation, only one in which "will" meets "commitment", makes threats credible.[40] Similarly, in Wilner's and Wenger argue that resolve and commitment of the deterrer, through the communication of threats, prevents the adversary from pursuing unwanted action.[41] However, and as Vesna Danilovic argues, costly signals are not always effective in deterring the adversary. Markedly, this is true especially if the interests at stake are "intrinsic", thus central to pursue despite the dangers and risks.[42] Thus, at minimum, the continuum for communication remains prone to errors.

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[36] Jervis, Robert, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein. *Psychology and deterrence*. JHU Press, 1989.
[37] Jervis, Lebow & Stein, p.10
[38] Zagare, Frank C., and D. Marc Kilgour. "Asymmetric deterrence." *International Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (1993): 1-27.
[39] Jervis, Robert. *The logic of images in international relations*. Columbia University Press, 1989.
[40] Nalebuff, Barry. "Rational deterrence in an imperfect world." *World Politics* 43, no. 3 (1991): 313-335.
[41] Wenger, Andreas, and Alex Wilner, eds. *Deterring terrorism: Theory and practice*. Stanford University Press, 2012.
[42] Danilovic, Vesna. "The sources of threat credibility in extended deterrence." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45, no. 3 (2001): 341-369.

Finally, on a concluding note on deterrence and communication, Jervis, Lebow and Stein, on the lines of the intertwinement between psychology and deterrence, have come to the conclusion that deterrence theory is based on a flawed assumption that "adversaries relate to each other in a common frame of reference."[43] Based on their observations, a common meaning of symbols and threats is rarely shared between adversaries, thus leading to a greater probability of misperception and consequently, miscalculation. In this fashion, and as Paul Huth and Bruce Russett argue, verbal threats are rarely direct and blunt, but rather subtly understood in conventional diplomacy.[44] Likewise, Jervis has argued about a number of cognitive limits to rationality, especially misperceptions of value and credibility. Thus, perception, it being an elementary composition of deterrence, determines the flow of information and threats, their receptivity and resonance. If misperceptions occur, due to overconfidence for instance, communication is disrupted, threats are misread, and deterrence is jeopardized.[45] In the end, as Daniel Sobelman simply puts it, deterrence, notwithstanding fallacies, "is about making credible threats and making threats credible."[46]

Building on all the approaches to asymmetry, how do weaker actors deter effectively in open conflict? In reality, as Ivan Arreguin-Toft argues, the winning or losing of a war between asymmetric actors depends heavily on the "strategic interaction" between the parties in combat.[47] Put differently, Arreguin-Toft posits five major hypotheses through which he provides an

[43] Jervis, Robert, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein. *Psychology and deterrence*. JHU Press, 1989.
[44] Huth, Paul, and Bruce Russett. "Testing deterrence theory: Rigor makes a difference." *World Politics* 42, no. 4 (1990): 466-501.
[45] Jervis, Robert. "Deterrence and perception." *International security* 7, no. 3 (1982): 3-30.
[46] Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to Deter: Deterrence Failure and Success in the Israel-Hezbollah Conflict, 2006–16." *International Security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-196.
[47] Arreguin-Toft, Ivan. "How the weak win wars: A theory of asymmetric conflict." *International security* 26, no. 1 (2001): 93-128.

analysis of the different strategic military approaches used by asymmetric actors. For instance, in an active conflict, the weaker actor with an indirect strategy is more likely to win a war if the stronger actor uses a conventional military strategy. Thus, "strong actors are more likely to lose opposite-approach strategic interactions."[48] Adding to the importance of norms and communication, Arreguin-Toft argues that the deterrence posture of the weaker actor is enhanced in an asymmetric war if the strong actors uses conventional military strategies as opposed to unconventional tactics used by the weak actor.

2.3.8 The Strategy and Psychology of Deterrence

In symmetry like asymmetry, Freedman understands the concept of deterrence as first, a state of mind and second, as a strategic option.[49] On these lines, Freedman argues that a convergence between both ends makes of deterrence a successful option. On the psychological edge, Freedman champions the proper communication of threats for deterrence success. On the strategic end, Thomas Schelling addresses the commitment of states to deterrence in conflicts, alongside the possibility of multiple equilibria for settlement. Actually, Schelling stresses on the paradoxical fact that adversaries shall cooperate for success.[50] On the strategy of deterrence as well, Arreguin-Toft, like Patricia Sullivan and Andrew Mack argue that the winning or the losing of a war between asymmetric actors depends, in great part, on the "strategic interaction" between the parties in combat, notwithstanding the effects of "political structures" and the "costs of

[48] Arreguin-Toft, 112.
[49] Freedman, Lawrence. *Deterrence*. Polity, 2004.
[50] Schelling, Thomas C. *The strategy of conflict*. Harvard university press, 1980.

victory", as represented by the respective authors.[51] Yet, while winning remains, in many events, partial between asymmetric actors, deterrence then prevails.

Next, after elaborating the different approaches to deterrence, the chapter proceeds by highlighting the works on the case study of the thesis. After that, the chapter proceeds by highlighting the limitations of previous works and and the contribution of the thesis.

2.3.9 Deterrence Between Hezbollah and Israel

The works above have identified rational deterrence theory, its evolution from symmetric to asymmetric, in addition to the communication of threats and its repercussions on the success or failure of deterrence. Next, the literature pertaining to the case study of this research, i.e. Hezbollah and Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence, is addressed in the upcoming section.

On asymmetries post the cold war, Hezbollah, like other nonstate actors, has catalyzed the evolution of the concept of deterrence beyond conventionalism. Yet, much like the scholarship on deterrence, asymmetry and the communication of threats, which has focused on the state actor in the dyadic relation, the literature on Israel and Hezbollah has similarly been overwhelmingly centered on the state actor itself rather than on the non-state actor. For instance, out of many works addressing Israel in the deterrence equation, Amos Malka analyses the latter's asymmetrical warfare with different nonstate actors across the Lebanese and Palestinian theatres,

[51] Arreguin-Toft, Ivan. "How the weak win wars: A theory of asymmetric conflict." *International security* 26, no. 1 (2001): 93-128; Sullivan, Patricia L. "War aims and war outcomes: Why powerful states lose limited wars." *Journal of conflict resolution* 51, no. 3 (2007): 496-524; Mack, Andrew. "Why big nations lose small wars: The politics of asymmetric conflict." *World politics* 27, no. 2 (1975): 175-200.

thus Hezbollah.[52] Likewise, Thomas Rid studies the Israeli experience of deterrence, the use of force, its limitations and its challenges, against different nonstate actors like Hamas and Hezbollah.[53] Therefore, these two-sample works illustrate how the scholarship on asymmetric deterrence has focused greatly on Israel itself and did not take Hezbollah and the discursive role of deterrence into account.

Two prominent works, out of very few, specifically shed light on the Israeli-Hezbollah deterrence relationship. To begin with, Jean Loup Samaan's work titled "From War to Deterrence? Israel-Hezbollah Conflict Since 2006" is centered around understanding the structural, regional and international dimensions upon which the deterrence paradigm is built between both adversaries in the time period after 2006.[54] In fact, this work assesses deterrence between both actors in terms of a pool of changing regional games, thus making of deterrence between Hezbollah and Israel a product of a bigger geopolitical landscape. Nevertheless, Samaan incorporates an analysis of the remaking of the deterrence posture of both parties, especially after 2006. Yet, this analysis little referred to discourse on one hand, but rather focused on the strategic and military environment.

Adding to Samaan's contribution to understanding deterrence between Hezbollah and Israel, Sobelman, in his work titled "Learning to Deter: Deterrence Failure and Success in the Israel-Hezbollah Conflict, 2006-2016", studies the "sources of stable deterrence" between both

[52] Malka, Amos. "Israel and asymmetrical deterrence." *Comparative Strategy* 27, no. 1 (2008): 1-19.
[53] Rid, Thomas. "Deterrence beyond the state: The Israeli experience." *Contemporary Security Policy* 33, no. 1 (2012): 124-147.
[54] Samaan, Jean-Loup. *From war to deterrence? Israel-Hezbollah conflict since 2006*. ARMY WAR COLLEGE CARLISLE BARRACKS PA STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, 2014.

actors.[55] On these lines, Sobelman argues that first, both Hezbollah and Israel have met, over time, the prerequisites of deterrence and have thus learned to deter. Second, Sobelman unprecedently highlights the role of Nasrallah in threat communication, it being a fundamental pillar in the psychological war of deterrence. Hence, along these two main approaches, Sobelman's work compares, with a focus on the post 2006 period, how deterrence was misapplied by Hezbollah pre 2006, before fairly abiding to the requirements of deterrence post 2006, thus preventing a mutually devastating war for both parties.

As demonstrated, the common ground for Samaan's and Sobelman's works is a great emphasis on the period following the 34 days war between Hezbollah and Israel, notwithstanding their limited contribution to comparing the status of deterrence before and after 2006. Nevertheless, while Samaan's article little interprets the role of Nasrallah's rhetoric of deterrence and its contribution to establishing a deterrence status quo between both parties, Sobelman evaluates in greater depth the role of Nasrallah's discursive deterrence strategies. However, and building on the important contribution of both authors to understanding deterrence between asymmetric actors, the following will underpin the gaps in an attempt to fulfill the analysis on deterrence, in terms of rhetoric and military capability, between Hezbollah and Israel.

2.3.10 Limitations and Gaps

First, both works by Samaan and Sobelman have focused in great part on the period after 2006, thus voiding their arguments from a deep analysis of the deterrence pattern and its critical

[55] Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to deter: deterrence failure and success in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, 2006–16." *International security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-196.

development over time between both Hezbollah and Israel. Thereby, this thesis seeks to demonstrate, comprehensively, the evolution of the deterrence paradigm between both parties starting the earliest war years in the 1990s, passing by withdrawal in 2000, the 2006 war and after. Resultantly, a rather complete image of deterrence between Hezbollah and Israel, its demise in 2006, and its relative success after 2006, will be analyzed in greater depth.

Second, Sobelman's argument incorporates the different variants of deterrence, i.e. by punishment and by denial, yet with little reference to the other types like immediate, narrow or general deterrence. Similarly, Samaan's work coins but the term "cumulative deterrence" to denote deterrence between both parties as operating on two levels: the micro (specific military responses) and the macro (military supremacy). Thus, although both works touch on some the different types of deterrence governing the relationship between Hezbollah and Israel, this thesis nevertheless seeks to converge between these different approaches. Also, it seeks to detail extensively the evolution of deterrence between both parties based on the contribution of prominent authors to the theory of deterrence, as explained in the methods section. Thus, the thesis will create a clear theoretical paradigm to assess the different variants of deterrence applied over time between Hezbollah and Israel.

Third, while Sobelman's work unprecedently underpins Nasrallah's discursive deterrence strategies, yet with only a great emphasis on the post 2006 era, Samaan referred, but little, to Nasrallah's discursive contribution to deterrence, but focused more on the geopolitical environment engulfing the deterrence relationship between both parties. Hence, this thesis seeks first, to understand the discursive deterrence pattern of Nasrallah since 1992 at least, and second,

will analyze the latter's discourse in line with the geopolitical and military developments accompanying every time period. Hence, by complementing discourse and deterrence to military capability and geopolitical developments, the deterrence posture, from the viewpoint of Hezbollah, will be better analyzed.

In short, the following main gaps can be deduced from Sobelman and Samaan's scholarly contributions. First, none of the authors, Samaan in particular, has analyzed rhetoric per se comprehensively and explicitly since Hezbollah's earliest days in its combat with Israel by 1992, passing through the 2006 war and until present times. Second, both works have not fully considered the explicit and directly proportional relationship between the different variants of deterrence, by denial or punishment, and Hezbollah's growing military capability.

On a final note, Nicholas Noe, contributes to understanding Nasrallah's discourse through the book "The Voice of Hezbollah".[56] This book brings together a collection of Nasrallah's speeches and interviews between the mid-1980's until 2006. Actually, significant in this book is the compilation of Nasrallah's most important speeches, translated to English, thus addressing not only Middle Eastern observers but as well a wider audience. Yet, despite its important contribution to translating and compiling a big number of Nasrallah's speeches, it has yet little analyzed these speeches, except for few lines at the beginning of every section. Nevertheless, this work will serve as an important asset to this thesis, especially that it has brought together a number of speeches to be analyzed on the lines of deterrence.

[56] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. London: Verso, 2007.

2.4 Conclusion

In short, this literature review has first provided an insight on the theoretical approaches to rational deterrence theory. Second, it has demonstrated the contribution of the respective authors to the case study this thesis and their limitations. Next, the methodological approach upon which the analysis of the thesis takes place is demonstrated.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

After illustrating the different works on deterrence, the following section will detail the analytical approach of the thesis. It will underpin the hypotheses and variables, the different concepts addressed, the main arguments posed, the case study approach and the type of analysis which is taking place.

3.2 Hypotheses and Variables

Throughout, the thesis builds on the following main variables. First, the independent variable is "military capability" while the dependent variable is "Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence." Actually, the concepts and variables are defined in detail in the section on concepts. Briefly speaking, military capability refers to the ability to preserve fire power while inflicting damage on the adversary. The discourse of deterrence refers to Nasrallah's verbal threats vis a vis Israel. In fact, the relationship between these two variables stipulates the following: As Hezbollah's military capability increases over time, especially rocket power, the discourse of Nasrallah is more likely to be associated with deterrence by punishment (threat to cause harm) rather than by denial (threat to defeat). Building on this, the three hypotheses formulated below highlight the

relationship between the two variables with respect to Hezbollah's deterrence posture vis a vis Israel.

Hypothesis 1: Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence is more likely to be associated with threats by punishment rather than by denial only when Hezbollah acquired transformative military capability, thus the ability to inflict considerable damage within Israel.

Put differently, the acquisition of rockets, especially Katyushas by 1992, revamped Nasrallah's discourse to embrace deterrence by punishment as in 1992, 1993, 2006 and after. Yet, before acquiring such capability, Hezbollah was not able to threaten by punishment, especially that Hezbollah lacked the ability to strike within Israel.

Hypothesis 2: Deterrence is more likely to be established when the credibility of Hezbollah's growing military capability has consolidated, over time, among Israeli officials and the IDF.

In 2006 especially, Hezbollah earned the privilege to demonstrate exceptional rocket capabilities and most importantly, its sustainment over the war days. Thus, after the end of the war, when Israel acknowledged that Nasrallah's threats by punishment are doable, deterrence between both parties was instated.

Hypothesis 3: The credibility and resoluteness of Nasrallah's deterrence discourse bolstered the party's deterrence posture, especially by 2006.

Since 1992, the deterrence framework has gradually been instated between both parties, notwithstanding pitfalls. Most importantly, Hezbollah, in great part to Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence, converged to military activities, was able to establish credibility, thus making of the communication of threats weapons of deterrence by themselves.

3.3 Defining Concepts

After positing the hypotheses, this section defines the following concepts. First, Stephen Biddle defines the term military capability based on two subsections: the offensive and the defensive. On the offence, Biddle defined military capability as "the capacity to destroy the largest possible defensive force over the largest possible territory for the smallest attacker casualties in the least time."[57] On the defense, he defines military capability as "the ability to preserve the largest possible defensive force over the largest possible territory with the greatest attacker casualties for the longest time."[58] On these lines, the thesis analyzes how Hezbollah, who since 1992, was mostly on the defensive mode of action, has acquired the ability to deter Israeli attacks, especially through rocket power.

Second, the thesis employs the following variants of the concept of deterrence. Beyond the macro definitions provided in the literature review, the concept is further decomposed into several sub conceptions. The deterrence relationship between Hezbollah and Israel is essentially central, as opposed to extended, as per Freedman's terms, since it is happening between two actors per se and not through allies or third parties.[59] However, as chapter 4 suggests, Nasrallah's

[57]Biddle, Stephen D. Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2004.
[58] Biddle, 6.
[59] Freedman, Lawrence. *Deterrence*. Polity, 2004.

discourse did extend to address the US, especially after the events of 9/11 and the latter's invasion of Iraq.

Third, within central deterrence, the variants of punishment and denial arise. According to Robert Pape, punishment "threatens to inflict costs heavier than the value of anything the challenger could gain"[60]. Denial, however, "threatens to defeat the adventure, so that the challenger gains nothing but must still suffer the costs of the conflict".[61] Along both variants, with the acquisition of exceptional rocket power, Nasrallah's discourse evolved to embrace punishment alongside denial.

Fourth, deterrence by punishment and denial are applied on the lines of general, narrow or immediate deterrence strategies. According to Morgan, general deterrence happens "when opponents who maintain armed forces regulate their relationship even though neither is anywhere near mounting an attack."[62] On narrow deterrence, Freedman defines it as "deterring a particular type of military operation within a war".[63] Immediate deterrence, according to Morgan, is "a relationship between opposing states where at least one side is considering an attack while the other is mounting a threat of retaliation in order to prevent it".[64] Building on these variants, the thesis assesses Hezbollah's military activities and Nasrallah's discourse respectively.

[60] Pape, Robert A. *Bombing to win: Air power and coercion in war*. Cornell University Press, 1996.
[61] Pape, 7.
[62] Pape, 7.
[63] Freedman, Lawrence. *Deterrence*. Polity, 2004.
[64] Morgan, Patrick M. *Deterrence: A conceptual analysis*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1977.

Fifth, this thesis draws a distinction between vague and targeted deterrence, in line with Nasrallah's discourse. In this vein, the former refers to the threat of punishment without specifying a particular target or object. The latter refers to the threat of punishment by specifying the targets under scrutiny. In this fashion, the thesis analyzes the evolution of Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence by punishment over time.

3.4 Main Arguments

After defining the above terms, the four main chapters of the thesis build on the following overarching argument: *"Nasrallah's threats, which converged with the idea of credibility and heightened military capabilities, especially after 2006, have in great part contributed to establishing deterrence against Israel."* Based on this argument, the thesis studies in depth the congruence between the deterrence discourse of Nasrallah and its compatibility with military capability. Nevertheless, derived from the latter are the following sub arguments.

Argument 1: To maintain a solid deterrence posture, Nasrallah has more likely resorted to an intensive communication of threats through its most vocal leader Hassan Nasrallah.
Argument 2: Hezbollah is more likely to see in deterrence a victory over Israel, especially that open wars, like the 2006 war, have proven to be costly and inconclusive.
Argument 3: Since 2006, Nasrallah's threats bolstered Hezbollah's deterrence posture greatly against Israel.

3.5 Case Study Overview

After the overview of the concepts, hypotheses and arguments, this section sets the ground for the methodological approach of the thesis. The research is primarily a case study analysis. Throughout the four chapters, the organization of Hezbollah, and second, its Secretary General, Nasrallah, compromise the main elements of the case study. Nevertheless, within this case study, the longitudinal nature of the analysis studies the military and geopolitical developments accompanying deterrence and Hezbollah between 1992 and 2019. Therefore, the thesis is divided chronologically, based on the evolution of the discourse marked by junctural events.

In fact, Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence is the unit of analysis of the thesis. This work will interpret the discourse of deterrence in terms of understanding its effects on the deterrence posture of Hezbollah vis a vis Israel. On these lines, the thesis analyzes the discourse of deterrence adopted by Nasrallah since 1992 and its efficacy in instating deterrence, through credible threats, between Hezbollah and Israel, over time. Thus, deterrence through the communication of threats in asymmetric conflicts will compose the nucleus of the analysis throughout the thesis.

In reality, although asymmetrical conflicts and deterrence are not exclusive to Hezbollah and Israel, the former yet remains one of the fittest case studies to understanding the conceptions of asymmetry, deterrence, and the communication of threats for the following two reasons. First, Hezbollah and Israel can illustrate the theory of deterrence and its flaws, best, as both parties, after having passed through a number of challenging events, have been maintaining a relative status quo of deterrence for at least thirteen years now.

Second, Hezbollah, the focus of this study, has deployed the concept of deterrence vis a vis Israel in a different fashion than other non-state actors in the Middle East like Hamas, Fateh, ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) or the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party). In this vein, the below table illustrates a comparison between some of the most significant nonstate actors in the world today, and in the Middle East specifically. The table illustrates social characteristics (popular mobilization), organizational (highly structured internal organization), political (successful political participation), communicatory (access to mass media: TV and radio), military (significant military capabilities), and longevity (sustainability and survival). To each of these characteristics, the table sets a mark of "low", "average" and "considerable" to measure the performance (i.e. low performance, average performance and considerable performance) of the nonstate actors for every characteristic demonstrated.

Characteristics/ Nonstate Actors	**Hezbollah**	**PKK**	**Hamas**	**ISIS**
Popular Mobilization	Considerable	Considerable	Average	Low
Highly Structured Internal Organization	Considerable	Average	Average	Average
Successful Political Participation	Considerable	Average	Average	Low
Access to Mass Media: TV and Radio	Considerable	Average	Considerable	Low
Significant Military Capabilities	Considerable	Average	Average	Low
Sustainability and Survival	Considerable	Considerable	Considerable	Low

Table 1: A comparison of Non-State Actors' Characteristics

First, on popular mobilization, Hezbollah has been able to harness most of the Shiite population in Lebanon in favor of its ideology. Internally, Hezbollah has safeguarded itself from

any potential competition, especially after its understanding with Amal.[65] For instance, not only was Hezbollah able to create a web of social services for its people in the Dahiya suburb, it was nevertheless able to secure, with Amal, all of the Shiite seats in the parliamentary elections in 2018. Resultantly, Hezbollah's popular legitimacy remains highly safeguarded, at least until today.

Second, on structure and hierarchy, Hezbollah has created an extensive internal network which divides the party into a number of branches, each of which holds the responsibility of an activity, whether military, social or political. Since Hezbollah has a central influence within Lebanese territories and across the borders, its internal organization has become fundamental for its success, on the military level.[66]

Third, on political participation, in 1992, Nasrallah, as secretary general of Hezbollah, for the first time mediated the party's Islamic revolutionary aspirations in Lebanon and thus participated in the first parliamentary elections after the civil war. Since then, Hezbollah has participated in all the elections which followed, and captured an increasing number of seats, along with its allies, thus installing its political leverage in the country.[67] As earlier explained, Hezbollah and Amal has been able to secure all Shiite seats in 2018, like in 2009.

[65] Haddad, Simon. "The origins of popular support for Lebanon's Hezbollah." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 1 (2006): 21-34.
[66] Hamzeh, Ahmad Nizar. *In the path of Hizbullah*. Syracuse University Press, 2004.
[67] Norton, Augustus Richard. "The role of Hezbollah in Lebanese domestic politics." *The International Spectator* 42, no. 4 (2007): 475-491.

Fourth, on access to media and TV, Hezbollah has developed an extensive media apparatus which includes a newspaper (Al Ahed), a radio station (Al Nour) and a TV station (Al Manar).[68] Through this web of media platforms, Hezbollah sought to deliver its messages not only to the local population, but to Israel as well. Actually, as the thesis explains, Nasrallah relied heavily on Al-Manar TV station, Hezbollah's official mouthpiece, to deliver his messages of deterrence through speeches broadcasted live, locally and over satellite.

Fifth, on military capabilities, Hezbollah evolved from dependency on basic "attritional guerilla warfare" to acquiring evolved tactics and strategies, especially after the acquisition of long-range and precise rockets. Indeed, the turning point events have been in 1992, 1993 and 1996, and most importantly in 2006. Nevertheless, the 34 days war demonstrated Hezbollah's heightened military capabilities, especially on the level of rocket power.[69]

Sixth, on sustainability and survival, Hezbollah, through the developments achieved on the above levels, has proved the ability to sustain and grow exponentially, politically and militarily, over time. Truly, today, the organized and hierarchical structure of Hezbollah, along its effective political participation and its transformative military capabilities, have all made of the latter a well-entrenched and powerful nonstate actor challenging Israel from Lebanese soil.

[68] Lamloum, Olfa. "Hezbollah's media: Political history in outline." *Global Media and Communication* 5, no. 3 (2009): 353-367.
[69] Gabrielsen, Iver. "The evolution of Hezbollah's strategy and military performance, 1982–2006." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 2 (2014): 257-283.

As the results show, the characteristics in the table have demonstrated some of the most salient challenges faced by nonstate armed groups struggling for operationality, legitimacy and survival. Although all the four nonstate actors presented in the table share certain commonalities, Hezbollah's ability to amass political, popular, military and media power has allowed the latter to sustain as a highly organized status-quo force challenging the military supremacy of Israel. For example, access to media, like military capability, them being two of the most important characteristics illustrated, are central features for any nonstate actor wishing to communicate threats and the message of deterrence credibly and soundly.

After explaining the significance of Hezbollah in understanding deterrence between nonstate and state actors, this section proceeds by answering the following questions. First, why is 1992 the starting point of the argument? In fact, although Hezbollah was founded informally in 1982, and officially in 1985, the starting point of analysis is rather the year 1992. Actually, during that year, with the appointment of Nasrallah as secretary general, Hezbollah, for the first-time since its inception, deployed Katyusha rockets. Hence, it being able to reach towns and cities in Northern Israel, this rocket soon proved to be a game changer in the equation of deterrence, before which Israel and Hezbollah did not negotiate a settlement of deterrence.[70]

Second, why is the discourse of Nasrallah, rather than that of other Hezbollah vocal figures, analyzed? In fact, in 1992, Nasrallah was appointed as the third secretary general for Hezbollah, after the assassination of Abbas Al Mussawi, and has been constantly reelected by Hezbollah's

[70] Samaan, Jean-Loup. "Missile warfare and violent non-state actors: the case of Hezbollah." *Defence studies* 17, no. 2 (2017): 156-170.

general council, the last of which was in 2008-9.[71] Therefore, between 1992 and present, Nasrallah remains the most influential spokesman, and has been characterized by his effective leadership of Hezbollah's military council, especially with his adoption of a new military strategy, by 1992, to deter Israel.[72] Nevertheless, Nasrallah, unlike many other vocal voices in Hezbollah, since his election as secretary general, has resorted extensively to the media, especially the TV, to communicate messages of deterrence to the Israelis. Therefore, the latter has become and embodiment of Hezbollah's reputational image vis a vis Israel, greatly. Resultantly, and building on the reasons elaborated, the thesis holds Nasrallah as a "constant" variable in the analysis happening place amid geopolitical and military changes.

3.6 Type of Data Analysis

The research is primarily qualitative in nature. The theory of rational deterrence and the communication of threats, in asymmetrical conflicts, is applied to the case study. In reality, the significant nature of this research lies in its commitment to applying and testing the theory of rational deterrence to an asymmetric conflict, unlike most approaches where the above has been applied to conventional and symmetrical actors. Second, in terms of the qualitative nature of data, the research data is divided into two categories: primary and secondary data sources.

On the primary level, the thesis is primarily based on discourse and content analysis. First, on the collection of discourse excerpts throughout the four case study chapters, I analyze Nasrallah's speeches with respect to watershed military and strategic events marking every time

[71] Daher, Aurélie. *Hezbollah: Mobilization and Power*. Oxford University Press, 2019.
[72] Daher, 158.

period. Between chapters 3 and 4, i.e. during the time period of 1992-2005, the book "Voice of Hezbollah" serves as the main reference for the analysis of speech excerpts. However, starting chapter 5 and on, I will myself be translating Nasrallah's speeches from Arabic to English, in addition to collecting speech excerpts from news articles and scholarly journals. Thus, most of the speeches in the time period between 2006 and on are exclusively translated by me for this thesis.

Second, on content analysis, the research work throughout the thesis builds on understanding the pattern in linguistic terms, images and embedded meanings which Nasrallah has adopted throughout his discourses since 1992. For instance, deconstructing the speeches suggests that Nasrallah saw in deterrence by denial, through the implementation of drama and theatrical images, the best resort to intimidate and deflate Israeli operations. On deterrence by punishment, Nasrallah, over time, especially after 2006, has transformed his discourse to targeted rather than vague punishment. Put differently, by 2006 and after, Nasrallah specified targets within Israel, unlike the threats he issued during 1992, 1993 where Katyusha rockets fell short of Northern Israel. Nevertheless, while Nasrallah never missed the opportunity to deter by denial since 1992, the latter paused deterrence by punishment between 1996 and 2005, before revamping it by 2006 forward. Thereby the thesis analyzes why and how the discourse of Nasrallah evolved to coincide with the requirements of deterrence and the communication of threats in times of relative peace and war.

On the secondary level, resources pertaining to the theory of deterrence are primarily derived from books, scholarly works and articles as illustrated in the literature review. Also, on the case

of Hezbollah and Israel, books and articles serve as a reference to understand the geopolitical environment and military developments engulfing the deterrence status between both actors with respect to Nasrallah's speeches.

3.7 Conclusion

In sum, after positing the research questions, the literature review and the methodology, this chapter underpinned the analytical contribution of this thesis vis a vis the asymmetric deterrence relationship between Hezbollah and Israel. Nevertheless, important to note is that although deterrence is the main focus of this study, other factors like political agreements and geostrategic developments significantly contribute to understanding the conflictual relationship between both parties. However, deterrence remains the prime focus of this study, it being at the nucleus of the status-quo prevailing. Next, through an extensive study of Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence, the four case study chapters will integrate into the analysis the methodological and conceptual grounds established earlier.

Chapter Four

The Shaping of Deterrence: Nasrallah's Deterrence Discourse and the "Rules of the Game"

4.1 Introduction

Since the early 1980s, Israel and Hezbollah have been exploiting their resources to discover the best option to pursue: to win the war, if possible, or to deter, if winning remains uncertain. Really, both actors were still inspecting the provisions of an unraveling rivalry, especially that Hezbollah was still a newborn adversary for Israel. In fact, Hezbollah's strategies have proven to be closely tied to deterrence rather than to a desire for direct warfare. Building on this basic premise, Hezbollah has indeed, since its inception in 1982, sought to essentially deter Israel, as a means to alter the balance of power to its advantage, rather than totally win over the latter's military superiority.

In this vein, one of the most prominent deterrence strategies which has been used by the party's Secretary General, Hassan Nasrallah, since 1992, is rhetorical deterrence. In fact, evidence suggests that Nasrallah, only after the acquisition of Katyusha rockets, was able to champion a rhetoric of deterrence by punishment, followed by denial. Really, the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon through the security zone, and its consecutive operations inside Lebanon, defined much of Nasrallah's impetuses to employ discursive deterrence strategies.

Thus, although Hezbollah emerged as a preliminary band of radical zealots, by 1992, it began to gradually enshrine a deterrence formula, in practice and rhetoric, vis a vis Israel.

Along the lines of deterrence, this chapter will first begin by providing an overview of the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel to understand best the deterrence relationship between both parties in relation to the geopolitical landscape governing the scene. After this overview, the first section will address Nasrallah's rhetoric of immediate deterrence and by punishment, its causes and effects, vis a vis two watershed events in 1992 and 1993. The following section analyzes a third critical event in 1996 to understand the reasons for Nasrallah's shift in discourse from punishment to denial starting 1996 and after.

Then, after examining these events with respect to discourse, the chapter will proceed by explaining the reasons for the Israeli preparations for withdrawal in 2000. Most importantly, Nasrallah's victory speech upon Israeli total withdrawal is analyzed in light of the discursive strategy of general deterrence by denial. Thus, in short, this chapter will examine the evolution of Nasrallah's deterrence discourse, its relation to military capabilities, and its fluctuations between immediate and general, by denial and by punishment during the time period of 1992-2000.

4.2 The Security Zone and the Conflict in South Lebanon: An Overview of Hezbollah and Israel's Early Days in the Journey of Warfare and Deterrence

In 1975, Lebanon sunk into a decade and a half long civil war. Resultantly, within the absence of a strong central state, militias, like the Palestinian guerillas, flourished within the

shreds of a failing country. Palestinian guerillas found in a deeply divided country like Lebanon, and which is of close geographic proximity to Israel, a perfect battlefield to harass the latter. Consequently, tensions between Israel and Palestinian groups actively operating along the Southern Lebanese borders augmented over the years.[73]

In 1978, in an unprecedented move, the Palestinian "Fatah" organization launched a sea-borne attack, through Lebanese waters, and into Northern Israel, thus killing 32 Israeli citizens nearby Tel-Aviv.[74] As a result of a string of rising assaults, that same year, Israel staged the "Litani Operation", which, in fact, was the latter's first invasion inside Lebanon. The purpose of this operation was to create a buffer zone between Northern Israeli settlements and the Southern Lebanese villages, thus securing Israeli territories from the guerilla's attacks. To safeguard the security zone, Israel created an armed proxy, the South Lebanese Army (SLA), whose responsibility was to establish and oversee a security zone covering several Lebanese villages across the Southern Lebanese territories. This security zone demarcated between the villages of Southern Lebanon, used by the combatants of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its affiliates, and Israeli Northern settlements.[75] In fact, the prime purpose of this zone was to prevent the infiltration of Palestinian combatants into Israel. However, because of the zone's limited depth within Lebanese territories, it was futile at halting rocket fire, mainly Katyushas.[76] Verily, with the rise of Hezbollah by the 1980s, bolstered by Iranian and Syrian support, along

[73] Sela, Avraham. "Civil society, the military, and national security: the case of Israel's security zone in South Lebanon." *israel Studies* (2007): 53-78.
[74] Sela, 59.
[75] Norton, Augustus Richard, and Jillian Schwedler. "(In) security zones in South Lebanon." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 23, no. 1 (1993): 61-79.
[76]Sela, Avraham. "Civil society, the military, and national security: the case of Israel's security zone in South Lebanon." *israel Studies* (2007): 53-78.

with the deployment of Katyushas, this zone soon became Hezbollah's and Israel's theatre for rounds of combats in the years to come.

In response to the 1978 invasion, five days later, the United Nations Security Council issued Resolution 425. The resolution first called for Israeli withdrawal from the Lebanese territories. Second, it created the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to reestablish peace and security between Israeli and Lebanese borders. However, Israel only established partial withdrawal into the security zone in violation to the terms of the resolution. Thus, the 5250 UNIFIL which were deployed as per the resolution, demarcated South Lebanon from the security zone and Israel.[77] Only in the year 2000 did Israel fully withdraw from Southern Lebanon, excluding the disputed territories of the Shebaa farms.[78]

In 1982, a second invasion, "Operation Peace for Galilee" was staged by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), for the same purpose of containing and eventually defeating the PLO. Yet, aside the PLO's threats, Israel, by 1982, had to face the determination of a newly founded militia, Hezbollah. Actually, the history of Shiite mobilization in Lebanon can be traced back to 1974 when "Harakat Al Mahroumin" was founded by Mussa Al Sadr.[79]

By 1982, the Amal Movement, "Harakat Al Mahroumin's" military wing and later, its descendent, saw a division between two camps. In the first, Nabih Berri and his supporters favored a "national salvation" government and a ceasefire with Israel. Opposed to this camp was

[77] Norton, Augustus Richard, and Jillian Schwedler. "(In) security zones in South Lebanon." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 23, no. 1 (1993): 61-79.
[78] Kaufman, Asher. "Who owns the Shebaa Farms? Chronicle of a territorial dispute." *The Middle East Journal* (2002): 576-595.
[79] Siklawi, Rami. "The dynamics of the Amal movement in Lebanon 1975-90." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2012): 4-26.

Hussein Mussawi's view which favored absolute resistance.[80] As a result of this schism, proponents of absolute resistance founded Hezbollah. Soon enough, on the lines of resisting the West through Israel, the latter became, by the advent of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, one of the latter's "most successful exports" in the Middle East.[81] With time, along a strong religious and ideological attachment, Iran and Hezbollah grew a solid financial and military bond through which the organization of Hezbollah flourished.[82]

Indeed, Hezbollah's early founders, who saw in the leadership of Amal excessive moderation, broke with the latter and assembled to safeguard their proponents against Israeli aggression, through a military wing first, a political wing second and later, an extensive and comprehensive network of social services.[83] By 1985, led by dissatisfied clerics and figures, Hezbollah announced itself formally.[84] The nucleus of Hezbollah consisted of prominent figures like Hussein Mussawi, Imad Maghniyye, Abbas al Musawi, Subhi al Tufayli, and others.[85] Its manifesto titled "An Open Letter: The Hezbollah Program", justifies Hezbollah's jihad against the oppressors of this world, i.e. the imperialist West spearheaded by the US.[86] Truly, Hezbollah was "born with a vengeance."[87] With that said, that same year, in 1985, Israel again withdrew into the security zone controlled by the SLA.

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[80] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[81] Feltman, Jeffrey. "Hezbollah: Revolutionary Iran's Most Successful Export." Brookings. Brookings, January 24, 2019. https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/hezbollah-revolutionary-irans-most-successful-export/.
[82] Ghorayeb, Amal Saad, and Emilie Sueur. "Le Hezbollah: résistance, idéologie et politique." *Confluences Méditerranée* 2 (2007): 41-47.
[83] Addis, Casey L., and Christopher M. Blanchard. "Hezbollah: Background and issues for Congress." Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, 2010.
[84] El-Husseini, Rola. *Pax Syriana: elite politics in postwar Lebanon*. Syracuse University Press, 2012.
[85] Alagha, Joseph Elie. *The shifts in Hizbullah's ideology. Religious ideology, political ideology, and political program*. Amsterdam University Press, Leiden/Amsterdam, 2006.
[86] El Husseini, Rola. "Hezbollah and the axis of refusal: Hamas, Iran and Syria." *Third World Quarterly* 31, no. 5 (2010): 803-815.
[87] Jaber, Hala. *Hezbollah: Born with a vengeance*. Columbia University Press, 1997.

Throughout the occupation years, mainly between 1982 and 2000, Hezbollah, to deter Israeli raids on Southern Lebanon, overwhelmingly engaged in low-intensity warfare, compared to high-intensity warfare carried by the IDF. For example, and until the introduction of Katyusha rockets in 1992, and even after, Hezbollah's warfare strategies consisted mostly of three major tactics: (1) guerilla attacks, (2) suicide car bombings, and (3) kidnapping.[88] Israel, on the other hand, resorted to airstrikes, artillery attacks and conventional troop missions. As Nasrallah had put it in words in a 1999 interview:

> *"... A typical battle would involve between 20 Israeli soldiers and only three to four resistance fighters."*[89]

Thus, the low-to-high intensity battles placed the IDF soldiers before unconventional tactics employed by Hezbollah, unlike the conventional tactics employed by regular and organized national armies. Truly, while Hezbollah's raison d'être was Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon, Israel's raison d'être in the security zone became, aside the PLO, Hezbollah's escalating assaults.[90] By then, two major actors predominantly controlled the scene in South Lebanon: Hezbollah, on one hand, and Israel on the other.

Nevertheless, on the lines of fighting the oppressors through first and foremost Iranian directions, Hezbollah, since its inception, carried a number of anti-US campaigns in Lebanon and abroad, in-line with its ideological drives. For instance, in 1983, Hezbollah held two closely

[88] DeVore, Marc R., Armin B. Stähli, and Ulrike Esther Franke. "Dynamics of insurgent innovation: How Hezbollah and other non-state actors develop new capabilities." *Comparative Strategy* 38, no. 4 (2019): 371-400.
[89] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[90] Najem, Tom P. "Palestinian-Israeli Conflict and South Lebanon." *Economic and Political Weekly* (2000): 4006-4009.

consecutive assaults against the US in Lebanon. First, on April 18, Hezbollah carried a suicide bombing against the US embassy in Beirut resulting in 63 killings.[91] Few months later, on October 23, Hezbollah affiliates also carried a suicidal attack against the US and French marine barracks stationed in Beirut, thus killing 299 French and US service personnel in total.[92] Thus, although Hezbollah's military campaigns focused primarily on Israel, its fighters did not spare the chance to punish and coerce what they believe to be the spearhead of oppressors in the world, i.e. the US and its allies. Since then, Hezbollah's terrorist posture began to enshrine even more as an undisputable reality within the circles of US decision makers.[93]

Meanwhile, amid these turbulent developments, Nasrallah's profile was promptly growing within the ranks of Hezbollah, which in its turn, was also progressively expanding. Actually, Nasrallah was deeply influenced by the teachings of the Iranian cleric Ruhollah Khomeini, and thus found in the party of Hezbollah a fertile ground to reproduce these convictions. By the late 1980s, and as Nasrallah had been working closely within the circles of decision making in Hezbollah, he was able to harness a group of admirers within the party due to his charisma, and his exceptional religious and organizational skills. For example, in 1985, Nasrallah was appointed as Hezbollah's chief for the Bekaa region, and by 1987, he was appointed to the leading Shura Council of Hezbollah.[94] As his profile grew giant within Hezbollah's cadre, in 1992, and after Mussawi's assassination, Nasrallah was elected as the third Secretary General of the party, following first Sheikh Subhi Tufeili, and second, Abbas al Mussawi.

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[91] Pape, Robert A. "The strategic logic of suicide terrorism." *American political science review* 97, no. 3 (2003): 343-361.
[92] Pape, 357.
[93] Norton, Augustus Richard. *Hezbollah: A Short History-Updated Edition*. Vol. 53. Princeton University Press, 2014.
[94] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.

Under Nasrallah's leadership, Hezbollah saw tremendous advancements on the political, military and social levels. On the military aspect, Nasrallah revamped the party's military cadre, with improvements on the intelligence and arsenal levels. For example, while the ratio of lost Hezbollah fighters for each Israeli soldier was 5:1 in 1990, this ratio incredibly decreased to 0.8:1 in 1998.[95] As the thesis explaines later, the introduction of Katyushas in 1992, these game changing rockets, further catalyzed Hezbollah's military capabilities vis a vis Israel.

On the political level, Nasrallah's pragmatism was able to transform the party from being absolutely revolutionary, on the lines of exporting and implementing the principles of the Iranian revolution to Lebanon, to one which seeks political and military development, yet through the rules of Lebanon's consociational political system. Thus, the party sought to harmonize and homogenize better its affiliation to "Wilayat Al Fakih" with its Lebanese national identity.[96] For instance, the party's emblem titled the "Islamic Revolution in Lebanon" had been substituted by the "Islamic Resistance in Lebanon."[97] Most importantly, the best embodiment to Nasrallah's adoption of a moderate policy has been the party's decision to participate in the 1992 parliamentary elections in Lebanon where it captured 12 seats in total with its allies, including 8 Shite seats.[98] On one hand, Hezbollah enshrined itself as a legal entity within Lebanon's political system. On the other, it has been branded as a terrorist organization by Israel and the US.[99]

[95] DeVore, Marc R., Armin B. Stähli, and Ulrike Esther Franke. "Dynamics of insurgent innovation: How Hezbollah and other non-state actors develop new capabilities." *Comparative Strategy* 38, no. 4 (2019): 371-400.
[96] Saad-Ghorayeb, Amal. *Hizbullah: Politics and religion*. Pluto Pr, 2002.
[97] Avon, Dominique, Anaïs-Trissa Khatchadourian, and Jane Marie Todd. *Hezbollah: A History of the" party of God"*. Harvard University Press, 2012.
[98] Norton, Augustus Richard. "The role of Hezbollah in Lebanese domestic politics." *The International Spectator* 42, no. 4 (2007): 475-491.
[99] El Husseini, Rola. "Hezbollah and the axis of refusal: Hamas, Iran and Syria." *Third World Quarterly* 31, no. 5 (2010): 803-815.

Resultantly, since 1992, Hezbollah has acquired a dual identity, the first of which has been implemented for the purpose of counterbalancing the second.

Actually, Nasrallah has taken pride in stating his ideological, and thus the party's convictions. According to the latter, unrestricted resistance to the enemy supersedes any other considerations in the political and military fields. However, important to underpin is that the term "resistance" per se remains controversial to assess. Does resistance happen through warfare, deterrence, or both? Indeed, it was this dilemma which Nasrallah and Hezbollah unpacked through practice, in different combat rounds with Israel, as explained next. In 1996, Nasrallah carried a press interviews on LBCI where he expressed loudly his position, and thus the party's, on Israel and the Islamic Resistance. He stated the following:

"Let us look at our experiences. Between 1982 and 1985, Israel withdrew from a large sector of the land which it occupied. Who do you think forced it to withdraw to its current security zone…? Only the resistance forced it to withdraw… Our conviction is that negotiations do not liberate land… We believe and consider the Resistance to be the only way."[100]

Finally, and as will be explored next, during the 1990's, three critical junctures in the relationship of deterrence between Hezbollah and Israel have set the stage for the establishment of the "rules of the games" for the very first time. These trailblazing and unprecedented rules have had their first symptoms of emergence appear in 1992, later progressively developed in 1993 and finally established in writing in 1996. Central to understanding the evolution of these

[100] Jaber, Hala. *Hezbollah: Born with a vengeance*. Columbia University Press, 1997.

rules is first Hezbollah's military capabilities, and second, their translation into a discourse of deterrence by Nasrallah. As will be explored, parity between both military action and a deterrent discourse has been pivotal in generating punitive threats vis a vis Israel.

4.3 Nasrallah's Discourse of Immediate Deterrence and by Punishment Between 1992-1993

4.3.1 The Episode of 1992: Nasrallah's Reply to Abbas Al Mussawi's Assassination

Ten years after Hezbollah's informal foundation, in 1992, tracing deterrence as a strategy materializing in the strategic calculus of Hezbollah became possible. In fact, this year saw important changes in Hezbollah's internal and military organization. First, Nasrallah was elected as Secretary General of the party under which the beginning of a novel deterrence strategy was implemented by Hezbollah through the deployment of Katyusha rockets.[101] Resultantly, the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel was revolutionized on two levels. First, since 1992 and until present times, Nasrallah has become the most influential and referenced spokesman of Hezbollah vis a vis Israelis. Second, with heightened capabilities, Nasrallah's influence as a credible spokesman grew unprecedently.

Nasrallah's itinerary of his deterrence discourse and strategy vis a vis Israel was first traced with the latter's election as Secretary General, shortly after the assassination of Abbas Al Mussawi in 1992. In fact, on February 16, 1992, and in an attempt to demoralize and decapitate Hezbollah's leadership, Israeli helicopter gunships struck Secretary General Abbas Al

[101] Norton, Augustus Richard. "The role of Hezbollah in Lebanese domestic politics." *The International Spectator* 42, no. 4 (2007): 475-491.

Mussawi's motorcade, thus successfully killing him, his wife and his son.[102] Indeed, the impact of the Israeli intelligence operation on the organization of Hezbollah was sharp enough and shook the party's foundations greatly.

However, unprecedently, Nasrallah's decision to counterstrike in revenge for the assassination was neither traditional nor anticipated. Verily, and unaware of the magnitude of Hezbollah's retaliation, the IDF did not factor in the possibility of surprising and untraditional retaliation strategies by Hezbollah's military. Markedly, Hezbollah deployed Katyusha rockets, a weapon which has never been used by the party's warfare strategies before.[103] Really, and to the demise of Israeli predictions, only two days after the assassination, Nasrallah highlighted Mussawi's death as:

> *"The beginning of a far-reaching spiritual, moral, and jihadist transformation that no one had expected, not even those who murdered him."*[104]

The tactical and jihadist transformation which Nasrallah has claimed was first embodied, on the short term, in an unparalleled retaliation strategy by Hezbollah. While the first retaliation targeted Israelis in their hometown, the second targeted Israel's agency transnationally. First, and for almost five consecutive days, Israeli Northern towns have been bombarded with Katyusha

[102] Alagha, Joseph Elie. *The shifts in Hizbullah's ideology. Religious ideology, political ideology, and political program*. Amsterdam University Press, Leiden/Amsterdam, 2006.
[103] Gabrielsen, Iver. "The evolution of Hezbollah's strategy and military performance, 1982–2006." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 2 (2014): 257-283.
[104] Marcus, Raphael D. *Israel's long war with Hezbollah: Military innovation and adaptation under fire*. Georgetown University Press, 2018.

rockets as a response to the latter's assassination.[105].Really, for the very first time, Hezbollah was able to hit targets within the Northern Israeli borders.[106]

Resultantly, this event represented a turning point which climaxed the confrontation between both parties through new tactics and strategies, at the heart of which became Hezbollah's newly dispatched Katyusha rockets. As evidence suggests, Hezbollah acquired these short-range rockets from Iran through Syria.[107] Yet, although short range, these rockets were hard to intercept by Israeli missile defenses as they flew on low altitudes and for a very short period of time.[108] Therefore, these preliminary rockets gave Hezbollah a paradoxical advantage over Israel's highly sophisticated military arsenal.

Second, and adding to one of Nasrallah's earliest and highly important decisions as Secretary General, i.e. the launching of rockets, Hezbollah as well carried two considerable attacks against Israeli interests abroad. The first attack happened just few months after Mussawi's assassination where alleged Hezbollah affiliates discharged a sizeable bomb next to the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires resulting in twenty nine casualties.[109] Then, two years later, in 1994, a Hezbollah-led suicide attack, carried for the same retaliation purposes to Mussawi's assassination, targeted,

[105] Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to deter: deterrence failure and success in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, 2006–16." *International security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-196.
[106] Samaan, Jean-Loup. "Missile warfare and violent non-state actors: the case of Hezbollah." *Defence studies* 17, no. 2 (2017): 156-170.
[107] Shaikh, Shaan, and Ian Williams. "Hezbollah's Missiles and Rockets."
[108] Shaikh & Ian, 3.
[109] Norton, Augustus Richard. *Hezbollah: A Short History-Updated Edition*. Vol. 53. Princeton University Press, 2014.

in Buenos Aires, the "Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina" which is the largest Jewish community in South America. This operation resulted in more than 100 causalities in total.[110]

In fact, the retaliations carried by Hezbollah were significant in nature and caught the Israelis in surprise. However, on the deterrence scale, Hezbollah's Katyusha attacks remained of high relevance, especially that these hard-to-track weapons had put Hezbollah in a better off deterrence position vis a vis Israel. Indeed, the geographical proximity of Northern Israel to Southern Lebanon made of these short-range rockets a highly effective strategy especially that by now, Hezbollah acquired the ability to hit Israel inbound. While, until 1992, the security zone successfully protected Israel against direct cross-border incursions into its territories, it failed incredibly at halting rocket fire.[111] This fact in itself has placed Israel under Hezbollah's direct rocket fire, thus jeopardizing the prime purpose of the security zone as a buffer area safeguarding Israel's security. Really, the security zone lost a big part of its effectiveness and became more of an insecurity zone for Israel.[112]

Surprisingly, even the deployment of short range missiles, like Katyushas, represented a novel strategy for the Israelis not to withstand at any potential cost. Really, Hezbollah's lethal response offered Nasrallah the privilege to speechify deterrence by punishment, for the very first time after his election as Secretary General. On these deterrent lines, on February 27, 1992, eleven days after the death of Mussawi, Nasrallah stated the following:

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[110] Levitt, Matthew. *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God*. Georgetown University Press, 2015.
[111] Luft, Gal. "Israel's security zone in Lebanon-A tragedy?." *Middle East Quarterly* (2000).
[112] Norton, Augustus Richard, and Jillian Schwedler. "(In) security zones in South Lebanon." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 23, no. 1 (1993): 61-79.

"…It is illogical for the enemy to tell us 'we will not attack only if you stop the Katyushas-this puts us in a position where we are subject to the enemy's conditions."

We have to work instead towards creating a situation in which the enemy is subject to our conditions. We should tell him: If you attack us, we will use our Katyushas; if you do not attack us, we will not use our Katyushas… We have to turn the situation around."[113]

A close analysis of these excerpts suggests that Nasrallah drew a significant comparison between two contradictory, still subtle, "rules of the game". In the first statement, Nasrallah claimed that Israel had been taking the lead in defining who attacks first and who retaliates next. In the second statement, Nasrallah championed a novel attack-retaliation formula by setting Hezbollah in the forefront of action. In this formula, Nasrallah expressed his commitment to subjecting the Israelis to his rules, instead of abiding to theirs. Markedly, this reformulation of strategies demonstrates a first attempt at designing the "rules of the game" between both parties, yet to Hezbollah's advantage.

Prior to 1992, according to Nasrallah, Hezbollah was totally subject to Israel's "rules of the game".[114] In other words, as Israel exhibited full military prominence over Hezbollah's vulnerable military structure, the latter had little room to prove tactical supremacy over Israel. However, with the introduction of Katyushas, Nasrallah saw in these rockets an opportunity to redefine the strategy of combat, but this time to Hezbollah's deterrence advantage. Hence, as

[113] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[114] Noe, 107.

Hezbollah is now reasonably capable of hurting Israel's security, Nasrallah's new "rules of the game" will further contribute to instating a deterrence equation to Hezbollah's benefit.

Therefore, by conditioning the launching of Katyushas to Israel's assaults, under the framework of immediate deterrence and by punishment, Nasrallah began to enshrine the basic rules of deterrence in his discourse, through retaliation. By 1992, the military rationale of Hezbollah substituted suicide attacks with rocket warfare as a new strategy[115] on the lines of deterrence, in practice and discourse likewise. For the first time, Hezbollah's improved military posture translated into a discourse of deterrence. In fact, the pilot equation which Nasrallah advanced will later prove resolute enough and will create a starting point for achieving a minimum required parity in capability, thus achieving successful deterrence between both parties. In reality, Katyushas will prove to be game changers, especially in the events of 1993 and 1996, whereby Hezbollah and Israel converged over two unparalleled deterrence agreements.

4.3.2 The Episode of 1993: The First Verbal Agreement of Deterrence

Still at the starting line of the development of a full-fledged discourse and strategy of deterrence, the years 1993 and 1996 marked critical junctures which began, but cautiously, to enshrine deterrence as a successful substitute to direct warfare between both parties, especially that Katyushas have proven to survive Israel's campaigns. To begin with, on July 25, 1993, Israel launched "Operation Accountability", a week-long assault, on Southern Lebanon aimed at

[115] Samaan, Jean-Loup. "Missile warfare and violent non-state actors: the case of Hezbollah." *Defence studies* 17, no. 2 (2017): 156-170.

weakening Hezbollah's military and popular infrastructure equally through mass attacks.[116] The assault was in fact a direct response to Hezbollah's killing of seven IDF soldiers stationed in the security zone that same year.[117] This attack was carried by Hezbollah as an indirect reply to the Oslo accords negotiations between Israel and the PLO which were getting closer to a successful conclusion.[118]

By July 31, 80 Lebanese villages were partially or completely destroyed, 6000 homes demolished and nearly 250,000 Lebanese displaced.[119] Hezbollah on his end, launched 151 rockets in total, resulting in 2 killings and 24 injuries among Israeli civilians.[120] Now, both Hezbollah and Israel have become under the threat of effective counterstrikes. Put differently, although military capability between both parties remains intrinsically asymmetrical, Hezbollah has been able to demonstrate the continuous ability to strike Israel within its boundaries, thus making of Katyushas effective counterstriking weapons.

Although the operation succeeded at expelling thousands of Hezbollah Shiite supporters from the South towards the Beirut suburbs, thus pressuring the Lebanese government immensely, it was yet dubbed to fail at ending Hezbollah's Katyusha arsenal.[121] In fact, the IDF was not able to halt rocket fire but instead suffered from Hezbollah's ability, over the seven consecutive days, at

[116] "'OPERATION GRAPES OF WRATH.'" ISRAEL/LEBANON. Human Rights Watch, September 1997. https://www.hrw.org/reports/1997/isrleb/Isrleb.htm.
[117] Alagha, Joseph Elie. *The shifts in Hizbullah's ideology. Religious ideology, political ideology, and political program*. Amsterdam University Press, Leiden/Amsterdam, 2006.
[118] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[119] Noe, 100.
[120] Gabrielsen, Iver. "The evolution of Hezbollah's strategy and military performance, 1982–2006." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 2 (2014): 257-283.
[121] Alagha, Joseph Elie. *The shifts in Hizbullah's ideology. Religious ideology, political ideology, and political program*. Amsterdam University Press, Leiden/Amsterdam, 2006.

launching around 151 rockets directly into Israeli Northern territories.[122] Compared to an intensive air, ground and sea Israeli campaign, Hezbollah's Katyushas still proved powerful enough to sustain and destruct. On a July 1993 interview, post the campaign, Nasrallah affirmed how Katyusha rockets were effectively contributing to deterring Israel's attacks by stating that:

> *"Hezbollah is now even more convinced of the rightfulness of its policies, options, resistance, and methods. We must use a method that can deter a murderous, treacherous enemy."*[123]

In fact, the method which Nasrallah pointed to in his statement mimicked much the method which Hezbollah implemented a year earlier, in 1992. To deter Israel in 1993, Nasrallah, like in 1992, resorted to an extensive launching of Katyushas, a weapon which became one of Hezbollah's focal points of power to imperil Israel's security. Thus, Katyushas served two main purposes. First, it ameliorated Hezbollah's deterrence posture. Second, because of this noteworthy amelioration, Katyushas became a cornerstone instrument shaping Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence.

Plausibly, and building upon the Katyusha's ability to sustain the operation, the result of this campaign was vested in a verbal and informal understanding between Hezbollah and Israel, thus ending the clashes between both parties. Actually, the agreement contributed primarily to

[122] Gabrielsen, Iver. "The evolution of Hezbollah's strategy and military performance, 1982–2006." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 2 (2014): 257-283.
[123] Marcus, Raphael D. *Israel's long war with Hezbollah: Military innovation and adaptation under fire*. Georgetown University Press, 2018.

ending the fight between both parties but did not articulate clear provisions for the relationship of deterrence between Hezbollah and Israel in the future.[124] Indeed, only three years later, in 1996, the agreement was interrupted.

Yet, although informal and oral, this understanding was one of the very first symptoms of deterrence by punishment adopted by Nasrallah, not fully articulated but shyly unpacked. The mere fact that Israel and Hezbollah began negotiating settlements illustrates a tilt in the balance of power, which, later, in 1996 translated into a written agreement of deterrence. In fact, on August 27, 1993, on the lines of deterrence by punishment, Nasrallah, and building upon his 1992 formula, coined a similar equation which he denoted as "simple".[125] He stated the following:

> *"Let the aggression on Lebanon stop, along with the bombing of the civilians, and we will stop firing missiles. Thus, the reason for bombarding the settlements is removed… He who started the war must end it; for our part, as soon as we hear that the aggression will stop at a specific hour, then this means that at that time the firing of Katyusha missiles will stop. If the aggression continues, then the Katyusha bombardment will continue."*[126]

Straightforwardly, Nasrallah posited that the firing of Katyushas is essentially a deterrent retaliatory action carried by Hezbollah to stop Israeli attacks. As soon as Israel ceases fire, Hezbollah will respond by ending the firing of its Katyusha rockets. In short, this was

[124] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[125] Noe, 105.
[126] Noe, 105.

Nasrallah's deterrent pledge to the Israelis. Yet, although the equation appears simple in theory and formulation, it however represents a dramatic shift in the roles played between both parties.

Now, the shift in power balances began to place Hezbollah in a better off position vis a vis Israel, thus paving the way to the development of a Katyusha-based preliminary deterrence strategy to the party's advantage. In 1993, and by deliberately replicating the same strategy used in 1992, Nasrallah was reestablishing the "rules of the games" through repeated action. As he puts it in few words in this same speech:

"The Katyusha bombardment has led to a new formula based on mutual forced displacement, mutual destruction, and equal terror. This formula was imposed by the Katyusha, and not the operations of the resistance in the border belt."[127]

"The rule of the game used to be that we got bombarded while the settlements remained safe… But the resistance imposed a new formula through the Katyusha. Thus, we say that we are committed to a new rule, one which was founded by us."[128]

A close inspection of these excerpts suggests that Nasrallah's choice of words, especially terms like "mutual" and "equal", emphasize the role of reciprocal rather than unequivocal punitive actions carried by both parties respectively. In other terms, the new "rules of the games" advanced by Nasrallah, do not, in any possible way, spare Israel's security from Hezbollah's menaces. Instead, Hezbollah was trying to construct a formula where, if Hezbollah's

[127] Noe, 107.
[128] Noe, 107.

infrastructure is hit, Israel is equally hit in return. Indeed, these statements illustrate best the equation of deterrence by punishment which Nasrallah had been trying to impose through primarily Katyusha rockets.

Undeniably, Nasrallah's rules, which began to slowly succeed, fell in favor of Hezbollah much more than Israel. First, not only did they catalyze Hezbollah's ability to launch rocket attacks, they nevertheless enshrined Katyushas as a principle strategy of combat. Second, these rules kept Israel within Hezbollah's circle of fire power, thus slowly demoralizing the perseverance of IDF soldiers present in the field.[129] In effect, Nasrallah, over the first two rounds in 1992 and 1993, expressed commitment, in rhetoric and action, to a new strategy, which resulted in both tangible and psychological damages on the Israeli end.

Next, and through a third combat round, carried on the same premises of its predecessors, resulted first, in a formal agreement of deterrence, and second, recalibrated Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence to denial for several reasons elaborated.

4.4 The Domination of Nasrallah's Discourse of Deterrence by Denial as a Substitute to Punishment Starting 1996 Inclusive

4.4.1 The Episode of 1996: The First Written Agreement of Deterrence

Between 1993 and 1996, Hezbollah did not halt its cross-border raid activities along the security zone which, to Hezbollah, was its legitimate theatre. However, and as Nasrallah has posited, the party refrained from launching Katyushas as long as Israel contained its aggression

[129] Marcus, Raphael D. *Israel's long war with Hezbollah: Military innovation and adaptation under fire*. Georgetown University Press, 2018.

within the borders of the security zone. Therefore, and as the 1996 operation will illustrate, Nasrallah, at this point, was very much concerned about proving Hezbollah's capability of deterring Israel's large-scale campaigns through the rocket policy which he had implemented in 1993.

On April 11, 1996, the Israeli "Operation Grapes of Wrath" was launched for similar goals of its 1993 precursor. The direct spark for the second Israeli campaign was Hezbollah's intensification of military operations around the security zone where four IDF soldiers have been killed in March of that same year.[130] Like in 1993, the year 1996 saw the traces of deterrence attempts by Nasrallah, through rocket power primarily. In fact, the sixteen-day campaign, which ended on April 27, was mostly about intense Israeli raids resulting in 165 killings and 401 injuries, along with considerable infrastructure damages to Lebanon.[131] During the operation, the IDF launched 2000 air raids and 25,000 artillery shells.[132] Hezbollah, for his part, launched around 639 rockets in total into Israel, resulting in 62 injuries.[133] Impressively, Hezbollah did not lose a single rocket launcher during the campaign.[134]

Verily, the 1993 verbal agreement between Hezbollah and Israel had set the stage for a groundbreaking agreement between both parties in 1996 where a written agreement was reached, especially that Hezbollah's Katyushas again proved invincibility. Sponsored by the US and

[130] Samaan, Jean-Loup. "Missile warfare and violent non-state actors: the case of Hezbollah." *Defence studies* 17, no. 2 (2017): 156-170.
[131]Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[132] Wehrey, Frederic M. "A Clash of Wills: Hizballah's Psychological Campaign Against Israel in South Lebanon." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 13, no. 3 (2002): 53-74.
[133] Gabrielsen, Iver. "The evolution of Hezbollah's strategy and military performance, 1982–2006." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 2 (2014): 257-283.
[134] Gabrielsen, 260.

France, the gist of this agreement was a pledge by both parties to refrain from launching respective attacks on civilian targets.[135] In other words, Hezbollah shall refrain from launching Katyusha rockets into Northern Israel as long as Israel and Hezbollah act within the security zone strictly. Most importantly, the agreement, as explained below, brought about a mega accomplishment for Hezbollah's legal status as a resistance force fighting occupation.[136]

In fact, the "April Understanding" bluntly legitimized Hezbollah's military operations in Southern Lebanon across the security zone, thus imposing Hezbollah as a status quo force to coexist with in the region.[137] Thereby, deterrence, as an alternative to war, became inevitable to achieve on the long-term, especially that Hezbollah anchored itself, through US and French sponsorship, and Israeli coerced agreement, as a legitimate entity to acknowledge in Lebanon. Also, Hezbollah's participation in the Lebanese parliamentary elections of 1992 and 1996 under Syrian hegemony further enshrined its legitimate status on Lebanese soil.[138] Put differently, Hezbollah struck a "state-resistance" deal whereby it safeguarded itself from internal claims of illegitimacy, thus authorizing its resistance against Israel.[139] Hence, the acknowledgement of Hezbollah's activities became dual. First, Hezbollah's share in the Lebanese political system and second, Israel's recognition of Hezbollah's resistance activity across the security zone both fed Hezbollah's deterrence posture greatly.

[135] "Israel-Lebanon Ceasefire Understanding." mfa.gov.il. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d. https://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/israel-lebanon ceasefire understanding.aspx.
[136] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[137] Noe, 146.
[138] Saad-Ghorayeb, Amal. *Hizbullah: Politics and religion*. Pluto Pr, 2002.
[139] Harik, J. P. (2005). *Hezbollah: The changing face of terrorism*. Ib Tauris.

On April 30, 1996, after reaching the agreement, Nasrallah carried an interview whereby he first, expressed his positions on the agreement, and second, took the opportunity to deter. Yet, unlike his discourse of deterrence by punishment adopted in 1992 and 1993, he addressed the Israelis, in 1996, by denial. So, what explains this shift in discourse? First, the terms of the 1996 agreement exhibited the US's and Israel's tacit recognition of Hezbollah's raison d'être for the first time since 1982, especially that the agreement legitimized Hezbollah's activities along the borderline, thus subtly recognizing the IDF as an occupation force.[140]

Second, Katyushas, which effectively translated into a discourse of punishment in Nasrallah's rhetoric, proved undefeatable over three rounds in 1992, 1993 and 1996. Therefore, these rockets have been acknowledged by the Israelis, formally through a written agreement, as highly predatory and threatening.[141] As a result, the equation of deterrence for which Katyusha rockets have been deployed was finally achieved.

Third, Nasrallah saw in the 1996 written understanding, unlike in the 1993 verbal understanding, a serious and permanent rather than a temporary agreement to be respected between both sides, especially when he claimed by 1996 that the "situation" is over, i.e. Israel's military superiority is no longer a trump card in its confrontation with Hezbollah.[142] In fact, as Nasrallah had been constantly reiterating that Katyushas are essentially weapons of deterrence, the written agreement became the best embodiment of Nasrallah's claims. Resultantly, the "April

[140] Norton, Augustus Richard. *Hezbollah: A Short History-Updated Edition*. Vol. 53. Princeton University Press, 2014.
[141] Malka, Amos. "Israel and asymmetrical deterrence." *Comparative Strategy* 27, no. 1 (2008): 1-19.
[142] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.

Understanding" met, to a high extent, the goals of Nasrallah's rocket policy. As he himself puts it in in his 1996 interview:

"When we read the text of the Understanding, we therefore arrive at the conclusion that the situation is over."[143]

On the lines of denial, Nasrallah's rhetorical strategy was, by and large, based on "ridiculing" and "underestimating" the capabilities of the adversary, while reinforcing the capabilities of Hezbollah's military. Really, and after Hezbollah had reached first, a satisfying agreement, and second, the threshold of its rocket policy, the rhetoric of denial adopted by Nasrallah offered the party and the "rules of the game" a new psychologically winning formula over punishment.

In fact, Nasrallah mastered the psychology of denial especially in the absence of large-scale campaigns after 1996. Instead of threats of physical damages, Nasrallah's discourse focused on withering the enemy's will, both soldiers and civilians likewise, in continuing or winning a war.[144] In this respect, the following two excerpts from the same 1996 interview demonstrate Nasrallah's attempt, on the lines of denial, at downplaying the morality and perseverance of the IDF in the battlefield.

"They believed that the resistance owns a limited number of rockets, and that on the first, second, or fifth day they would run out… All Israel's assumptions were wrong."[145]

[143] Noe, 151.
[144] Schleifer, Ron. "Psychological operations: A new variation on an age old art: Hezbollah versus Israel." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 1 (2006): 1-19.
[145] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.

"Striking Hezbollah has failed; ending the resistance by military means has failed."[146]

Adding to the above, in this same interview, Nasrallah did acknowledge the discrepancy in military proportionality between Hezbollah and Israel. In reality, this disproportionality is not unique to Hezbollah and Israel, but is an intrinsic mismatch between any asymmetric actors in active conflict.[147] However, Nasrallah was able to bridge this gap through the employment of Katyusha rockets as a psychological rather than a merely military or strategic weapon, thus feeding greatly the psychological edge of deterrence greatly. Indeed, the prime object of very intermediary weapons like Katyushas was not to weaken the power of the IDF. In lieu, Katyushas were aimed at two of Israel's most sensitive issues: its overall security and the loss of human life.[148]

Paradoxically, the climax of the Katyusha rockets, as a psychological weapon, really happened when the rockets were not actually deployed.[149] Interestingly, throughout, Hezbollah succeeded in inflicting "psychological shocks"[150] on Israel. In this respect, and still in the same interview, Nasrallah very openly revealed the psychological purpose of these weapons by stating the following:

[146] Noe, 151.
[147] Bowen, Wyn Q. "Deterrence and asymmetry: Non-state actors and mass casualty terrorism." *Contemporary Security Policy* 25, no. 1 (2004): 54-70.
[148] Gordon, Shmuel. *The Vulture and the Snake: Counter-Guerrilla Air Warfare: The War in Southern Lebanon*. Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, 1998.
[149] Gabrielsen, Iver. "The evolution of Hezbollah's strategy and military performance, 1982–2006." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 2 (2014): 257-283.
[150] DeVore, Marc R., Armin B. Stähli, and Ulrike Esther Franke. "Dynamics of insurgent innovation: How Hezbollah and other non-state actors develop new capabilities." *Comparative Strategy* 38, no. 4 (2019): 371-400.

"You might say, and correctly so, that there is no parity in rocket or firepower between the two sides but issuing threats, forcing Israeli civilians into underground shelters, wounding several of them, and damaging their factories are in themselves pressure factors."[151]

Clearly, in his 1992, 1993 and 1996 interviews, Nasrallah reiterated a central point which he focused much not to miss. On the three events, he focused on the fact that launching Katyushas are only "reactive" and not "active" in nature, and thus only occur in response to an Israeli attack on Lebanese civilians. This way, Nasrallah was working on consolidating two pillars in the relationship with Israel. First, Hezbollah will not launch attacks at first hand in any occasion.

Second, Hezbollah will reply to any attack launched by Israel, primarily by striking into its Northern territories. In this respect, the final reminder, which, in this case, was spelled in a more informative rather than a punitive or deterrent manner, was sent by Nasrallah to the Israelis in the same April 30, 1996 interview. Actually, he but reformulated the same Katyusha policy, as illustrated below:

"The resistance does not have a category of operations known as "launching a Katyusha rocket, because these launchings are not operations per se, but purely reactive strikes… It – Hezbollah – only uses Katyushas to protect civilians and deter the Israelis from attacking them."[152]

[151] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[152] Noe, 154.

To sum up, with the deployment of Katyushas in 1992, 1993, and 1996 by Hezbollah, Israel's prime object became to prevent the latter from launching these rockets unstoppably. However, this policy further demeaned Israel's deterrent posture as it made of preliminary rockets like Katyushas a strategic weapon.[153] Hence, despite disproportionality in military capabilities between both parties, Hezbollah was yet able to reduce the IDF to the level of its Katyusha rockets. As a result, while Israel first sought to terminate the organization of Hezbollah as in 1992, it soon consumed its huge military power to deter the party's Katyusha attacks. Therefore, Nasrallah was able to effectively invest in these rockets deterrently and rhetorically likewise.

4.4.2 The Rules of the Game post 1996: Nasrallah Abiding to Deterrence by Denial

Notwithstanding that denial did exist, but not as flagrantly as punishment, in Nasrallah's discourses on the three events explained earlier, an examination of interviews and speeches carried out by Nasrallah after 1996 suggest that he followed a discourse of deterrence by denial par excellence. Really, Nasrallah confined his deterrence jargon to denial for the same reasons which pushed him to shift his discourse on the eve of the 1996 understanding, as earlier explained. On top of that, Nasrallah abided by the "rules of the game" which he had set through the "April Understanding", and thus restricted attacks to the security zone per se. Very simply, as long as the operations were confined to the "rules of the game" Nasrallah deterred by denial.

For example, on the occasion of the martyrdom of Nasrallah's son, Hadi Nasrallah, the former delivered a speech on September 13, 1997 where he deterred by denial Israel's successful

[153] Malka, Amos. "Israel and asymmetrical deterrence." *Comparative Strategy* 27, no. 1 (2008): 1-19.

operation. Really, the operation occurred within the "rules of the game", i.e. the security zone. Therefore, instead of threatening Israel with future attacks or responses, Nasrallah preferred underestimating Israel's accomplishment. The following excerpt demonstrates this fact.

"Secondly, the Israelis might think that they have scored a victory by killing the son of the secretary general… This mujahid was with his brothers in arms on the frontlines with the enemy; he went to them, they did not come to him; he went to them on his own feet, armed with his gun and his willpower. This is the difference: it is not and could not be constructed as a victory for the enemy. This is a victory and honor for Hezbollah; this is a victory for the principle of resistance in Lebanon. Where is the victory?"[154]

Likewise, on following consecutive events, Nasrallah abided by the same token throughout. Again, in the absence of first, large escalations and second, innovative military capabilities beyond Katyusha rockets, denial remained Nasrallah's favorite and most secure option. In this vein, a further survey of speeches carried by Nasrallah in 1998 and 1999 illustrates even more Nasrallah's commitment to denial, in the absence of significant traces of punishment. For instance, in 1998, Israeli Prime Minister Bejamin Natanyahu and the Minister of Defense Yitzhak Mordechai announced a conditional withdrawal of Israeli troops as per the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 425. However, conditioned withdrawal was tied upon a "security agreement" which prevented Hezbollah from attacking Israel, thus effectively

[154] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.

disarming and immobilizing Hezbollah progressively.[155] On this event, Nasrallah, again, stoutly ridiculed and denied Israel's "dull" attempts. Along these lines, Nasrallah stated the following:

"For years now, the Israeli army has felt that it is drowning in a swamp of blood in South Lebanon and the Bekaa. This has sapped its strength and dealt a blow to its political and military ego… Withdrawing without any conditions or terms is a dangerous precedent for Israel and implies that the mythical army was defeated at the hands of the Lebanese people's resistance... Thus, the Israeli enemy is looking for a way to exit this swamp…"[156]

Moreover, in 1999, upon Ehud Barak's victory at the polls, and his promise to unilaterally withdraw from Southern Lebanon,[157] Nasrallah, in a June interview that same year, bolstered his discourse with denial and acutely demeaned Israel's presence in the South. Actually, Nasrallah, as illustrated in the previous excerpts, twisted the plane and conventional expressions of denial by using expressive language to suit a psychological campaign launched by him. In fact, this twist was even more evident in the 2000 victory speech, whose causes, reasons and effects are analyzed in detail next.

Actually, Nasrallah's alternation between a traditional and an emotionally led denial discourse has served the purpose of either strictly denying or denying with the purpose of generating reverberating intense psychological effects respectively. Truly, Nasrallah excelled in

[155] Kaye, Dalia Dassa. "The Israeli decision to withdraw from southern Lebanon: Political leadership and security policy." *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 4 (2002): 561-585.
[156] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[157] Kaye, Dalia Dassa. "The Israeli decision to withdraw from southern Lebanon: Political leadership and security policy." *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 4 (2002): 561-585.

the latter. Meanwhile, below, the first excerpt illustrates traditional denial, while the second two illustrate Nasrallah's sharp and unconventional employment of denial, as a prelude to the context of the 2000 victory speech.

"Furthermore, all the measures that Israel put in place on the frontlines failed to stop the Lebanese resistance fighters from reaching the Lebanese-Palestinian border, and many of our operations were actually carried out close to that border."[158]

"What is important, in the final analysis, is that the Israeli army has humiliated itself and lost its strongman image…"[159]

"According to the mujahidin, when an Israeli soldier is wounded, his unit's position quickly becomes obvious, thanks to all the screaming and wailing, which the mujahidin make fun of."[160]

As demonstrated, Nasrallah's discourse was one by denial par excellence when the "rules of the game" were respected by both parties, thus after the last campaign in 1996. Yet, and as this research will proceed by explaining, Nasrallah also resorted to denial because he was only able to fulfill the requirements tied to the discourse of deterrence by punishment when Hezbollah, after the transition period of 2000-2006 reorganized, remilitarized and thus rigorously reshaped on the military and organizational levels, especially after the acquisition of middle and long

[158] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[159] Noe, 200.
[160] Noe, 206.

range missiles. Indeed, relying on a World War II, short-range rocket, i.e. Katyushas, limited the abilities of Hezbollah in terms of precise and coordinated targeting.

Also, important to note that, although Hezbollah was still able to launch rockets through the security zone, this buffer area still disturbed Hezbollah's ability to place the rockets in their ultimate launching sites. As a result, many rockets fell in the void with little damages.[161] Unable to inflict widespread or considerable damages, Katyusha rockets were yet able to hurt psychologically rather than materially. Resultantly, Nasrallah's discourse was deterrent by punishment, only in times of retaliation in large scale operations, through immediate deterrence, and in an attempt to set or reset the "rules of the game".

4.5 Israeli Withdrawal in 2000: The Beginning of a New Era for Deterrence

4.5.1 Towards Israeli Withdrawal: Hezbollah's Exponential Escalation of Attacks

In fact, the Israeli presence in Southern Lebanon became psychologically and militarily draining, especially that Hezbollah's attacks increased exponentially in the very last few years of occupation. As a result of Hezbollah's increased shelling and attacks, incredibly unpopular became these harassments among Israeli soldiers and Israeli public opinion, to the extent that a considerable number of soldiers refused military service in Southern Lebanon.[162]

As well, public dissent climaxed when the "Four Mothers" movement sprung in Israel calling for an end to the war in Lebanon.[163] Actually, by using "low-intensity" and "irregular" fighting

[161] Luft, Gal. "Israel's security zone in Lebanon-A tragedy?." *Middle East Quarterly* (2000).
[162] Salamey, Imad. *The government and politics of Lebanon*. Routledge, 2013.
[163] Lieberfeld, Daniel. "Parental protest, public opinion, and war termination: Israel's 'Four Mothers' movement." *Social Movement Studies* 8, no. 4 (2009): 375-392.

tactics, opposed to regular and conventional military tactics used by the IDF, Hezbollah was able to maneuver, hurt and attack, thus inflicting considerable damage among IDF soldiers whenever cross-border raids occurred throughout this long period.

The escalation of attacks undergone by Hezbollah was unsustainable. Really, attacks on the IDF and the SLA grew uncontrollably. In 1990, 25 attacks were carried on average per year, while in 1994 it plunged to 190 attacks, and finally in 1998, it rose incredibly to 1519 attacks per year.[164] As a result of these heavily intensified raids, "for Israel, South Lebanon became a quagmire from which its army never returned in glory."[165] On average, 20-25 IDF soldiers have been killed on a yearly basis.[166] Therefore, under these tiring circumstances, Lebanon saw the final withdrawal of Israeli troops in the wake of the year 2000.

Really, Israel's unilateral withdrawal decision, amid losses and very limited gains, badly tarnished its deterrent posture.[167] *"This 18-year tragedy is over,"* said Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak upon Israeli complete withdrawal from the security zone.[168] On these lines, Nasrallah, in his June 1999 interview, confirmed the "tragedy" of not only the Israeli soldiers, but of their families and the Israeli society as well, by positing the following:

"Although the resistance has been (in South Lebanon) for many years, the cumulative effect of its operations on one hand, and Israeli losses and the fate of their agents in South Lebanon on the other, took their toll. Let me say, in this context, that we should not measure the

[164] Whitting, Christopher E. *When David Became Goliath*. ARMY COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLL FORT LEAVENWORTH KS, 2001.
[165] Jaber, Hala. *Hezbollah: Born with a vengeance*. Columbia University Press, 1997.
[166] Malka, Amos. "Israel and asymmetrical deterrence." *Comparative Strategy* 27, no. 1 (2008): 1-19
[167] Malka, 5.
[168] Orme, William A. "Barak Declares End to Tragedy as Last Troops Leave Lebanon." The New York Times, May 24, 2000. https://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/24/world/retreat-lebanon-israelis-barak-declares-end-tragedy-last-troops-leave-lebanon.html.

impact of events in South Lebanon based only on the number of operations or of Israelis killed and wounded, for there is something more important than that-namely the psychological aspect."[169]

4.5.2 Nasrallah's 2000 Victory Speech: General Deterrence by Denial at the Heart of the Discourse

On May 24, Israel finalized its complete withdrawal from Southern Lebanon, thus ending around 22 years of occupation since the first "Litani Operation" in 1978.[170] Only two days later, on May 26, 2000, Hezbollah organized a grand ceremony, the "Resistance and Liberation Day" in Bint Jbeil, to celebrate Israeli withdrawal and the resistance's "divine" victory.[171] Indeed, Hezbollah saw in the latter's pull-out an extraordinary win for the resistance and an incredible embarrassment for the largest and most advanced army in the region.

In fact, this mass ceremony, which was crowned by a speech delivered by Nasrallah in Bint Jbeil itself, was of immense importance to Hezbollah like the Israelis equally. It being one of the most symbolic villages liberated by Hezbollah's mujahidin, not only did a speech delivered live by Nasrallah at Bint Jbeil indicate victory, it further sent the message of commitment to deterrence.

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[169] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[170] Norton, Augustus Richard. "Hizballah and the Israeli withdrawal from Southern Lebanon." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30, no. 1 (2000): 22-35.
[171] Speeches-2000:Sayyed Speech in Full on 26 May 2000- Resistan..., 2011. https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/14178/446.

Verily, the best embodiment of Nasrallah's discursive deterrence strategies, on the lines of denial, between 1992 and 2000, is the latter's victory speech. A deconstruction of this speech suggests that Nasrallah extensively resorted to expressions of deterrence by denial which overwhelmingly dominated his discourse from start to end. In the following, a number of key excerpts, which are most expressive of the rhetoric of denial, in the consecutive order of which they have appeared in Nasrallah's speech, are illustrated.

"We're here today enjoying freedom and safety, for the enemy's aircrafts do not dare fly in the airspace. I tell you so because "Israel" that really feared a wooden model of a Katyusha rocket launcher placed in Kfarkila is too coward to attack you on such a day!"[172]

"The enemy bet that this region would experience so much unrest, that the families of one village would take revenge of other families in the same village or in another, and that every sect would assail another. The enemy thought that towns would be destroyed (as in the case of Haneen Town) and savage massacres would be perpetrated."[173]

"The era when we would fear the "Israeli" threats is over, and Barak knows that the era when his aircrafts would violate our airspace is over! He recognizes that the time when his tanks would desecrate our land is gone, and that the time when his boats would violate our regional waters is history!"[174]

"Therefore, this enemy, which has been defeated in Lebanon, is going to have no choices. As for the "Israeli" threats, they do not scare us. The "Israelis" along the borderline are scared.

[172] AlahedNews, 1.
[173] AlahedNews, 1.
[174] AlahedNews, 1.

They've been scared of some women and children standing by the iron barrier! They're scared of stones that anyone might throw at them, too!"[175]

"I tell you: Israel, which owns nuclear weapons and the strongest air fleets in the region, is feebler than a spider web- I swear to God."[176]

Noticeably, the victory speech had been saturated with expressions of intimidation vis a vis the Israelis to portray how any effort conducted by the IDF is essentially futile and is always deemed to fail before the mujahidin's strategies.[177] Interestingly, the context which Nasrallah created in his discourse was one of utter defeat for the Israelis. As for Hezbollah, Nasrallah proclaimed a unique national victory which reverberated across all nations and resistances in the Arab and Muslim worlds.

In fact, Nasrallah's denial strategy, in his victory speech especially, was not based on conventional statements, but converged between legend, metaphors, analogies and reality. For example, instead of using very mainstream expressions like, "Israel's aircrafts cannot violate the Lebanese airspace", Nasrallah resorted to much more emotionally compelling expressions by stating that, "…*the era when his aircrafts would violate our airspace is over!"* Both expressions are in denial par excellence but are formulated very differently, and thus appeal to the audience, supporters and enemy, much differently as well. While Nasrallah's latter expression uses expressive imagery to deny, the conventional denial statement is drier and less emotionally compelling. Thereby, Nasrallah's expressions of denial tend to resonate greatly. Similarly, when

[175] AlahedNews, 1.
[176] AlahedNews, 1.
[177] Schleifer, Ron. "Psychological operations: A new variation on an age old art: Hezbollah versus Israel." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 1 (2006): 1-19.

Nasrallah resorted to the metaphor of the "spider's web", he was reducing Israel's capabilities by denial and through figurative language.

Hence, Nasrallah's unconventional employment of denial further exacerbated the popularity of his speeches and their resonance. His words were thus more of an organized campaign of infiltration and harassment vis a vis the Israelis. In short, through denial, Nasrallah was communicating one message: the Israelis, masses and officials, are before an arduous long-term struggle, yet to Hezbollah's absolute favor.[178]

Nevertheless, in-between the congestion of denial expressions, Nasrallah did still communicate one, and only one threat by punishment in his speech. Yet, the threat communicated, as illustrated below, was vague rather than militarily translatable and punitive.

"He (Ehud Barak) knows that any aggression against Lebanon isn't going to be confronted with a complaint to the Security Council nor with tears; it shall be encountered by the resistance... If "Israel" assails Lebanon, then it shall pay an expensive price!"[179]

Really, this threat is more likely to resonate in the hearts and minds of the masses rather than echo among Israeli officials themselves. Many questions in this vein arise. For instance, what is the price to be payed? Did Hezbollah acquire new missiles within few days from Israeli withdrawal? Therefore, although punitive in the outlook, it was yet vague to the extent of blurriness. Actually, Nasrallah couldn't communicate further punitive threats as Hezbollah's

[178] Schleifer, 11.
[179] Speeches-2000:Sayyed Speech in Full on 26 May 2000- Resistan..., 2011. https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/14178/446.

military capabilities have been fully consumed over the past decades. Therefore, denial became Nasrallah's most secure resort. Really, now that Israel withdrew into its territories, Hezbollah's prime object became to prevent its return through general deterrence first, and essentially by denial.

Although Israel's retreat represented an unparalleled victory for Hezbollah, the latter was yet in need to reorganize and remilitarize, especially that a considerable part of its infrastructure had been destroyed by Israel. As Hezbollah had been previously preoccupied with liberation, it was now time to rethink deterrence and its strategies. Actually, evaluating and understanding the science of war with Israel, comprehensively, requires a minimum situation of relative peace or stability. Thereby, the discourse of denial in the 2000 speech fed much this purpose. As Freedman argues, denial is used whenever an actor favors "controlling the situation sufficiently."[180] Hence, resorting to deterrence by denial spared Hezbollah the risks of first, escalation and second, of the unintended consequences of punishment, especially that Nasrallah was aware of the mismatches in military capabilities between both parties.

Finally, and as Karl Mueller puts it, "denial offers an advantage over punishment, in that it fails gracefully if it does not work."[181] In simpler terms, denial spares the risks of any punitive physical action which if failed, will have tangible self-defeating impacts. Thus, upon withdrawal, denial was Nasrallah's favorite resort to first, avoid communicating inflatable threats, beyond Hezbollah's Katyusha capability, and second, to control and maintain its achievement. However,

[180] Freedman, Lawrence. *Deterrence*. Polity, 2004.
[181] Mueller, Karl. "Strategies of coercion: Denial, punishment, and the future of air power." *Security Studies* 7, no. 3 (1998): 182-228.

although deterrence by denial fed Hezbollah's strategy in the year 2000, prolonged denial between 2000 and 2006, backfired. Really, after the year 2000, deterrence by denial hid Hezbollah's military capabilities and red lines, thus stimulating Israel's appetite to redefining the "rules of the game".

Adding to denial is Nasrallah's attempt to deterring "all wars" with Israel, on the lines of general deterrence. While the discourse between the years 1992 and 1999, amid Israeli military presence in Southern Lebanon, abided to the rules of immediate deterrence primarily, the discourse of Nasrallah upon withdrawal coincided with general deterrence. In this case, and unlike previous discourses which persuaded the adversary through immediate deterrence after every confrontation, the 2000 speech served more directly the purpose of convincing the adversary to absolutely not use force again, in times of relative peace, upon withdrawal.

4.6 An Overall Analysis of Nasrallah's Discursive Deterrence Pattern Between 1992-2000

In short, four takeaways can be inferred by analyzing the words of Nasrallah between 1992 and 2000. First, Katyusha rockets were Nasrallah's only weapons which translated into a preliminary discourse of deterrence by punishment. Guerilla warfare and other tactics did not translate into this discourse, but instead into a discourse of denial, as evident after 1996 where cross-border raids dominated the scene at the expense of Katyusha attacks. In reality, the Israeli society has proven to be highly vulnerable to rocket attacks. Therefore, Katyusha rockets scored

high on the ability to psychologically harm the Israeli civilian population under fire.[182] Resultantly, the cross-border raids, which have been operating even before the introduction of Katyushas, did not focally contribute to the creation of a discourse of punishment, especially that Nasrallah had relied heavily on Katyushas to reset the "rules of the game".

Second, the discourse of punishment, tied to Katyushas first, was also tied to immediate deterrence, i.e. active conflict. Indeed, Katyushas served in the first place as an urgent effort by Hezbollah to retaliate, thus, essentially to deter Israel.

Third, adding to the discourse of denial in 1996 for the reasons explained earlier, in the absence of high escalations like in 1992 and 1993, Nasrallah's discourse was not punitive. Thus, denial became Nasrallah's best resort, especially between 1996 and 2000.

Fourth, like in the post 1996 era, the discourse of Nasrallah upon Israeli withdrawal in 2000 was overwhelmed with expressions of denial rather than punishment. In fact, denial in 2000, like in post 1996 served the purpose of avoiding further escalations while abiding to the "rules of the game". Hence, while a discourse of deterrence by punishment is escalating in nature, the discourse of denial kept the activities on going along the borderline like "business as usual" before and upon withdrawal.

[182] Gabrielsen, Iver. "The evolution of Hezbollah's strategy and military performance, 1982–2006." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 2 (2014): 257-283.

In fact, Nasrallah made use of the 1996 “rules of the game” to extensively increase the rate of attacks to expel Israel from Lebanon. Markedly, since these raids were occurring within the “rules of the game” strictly but intensively, Israel had no pretext to escalate. Resultantly, the discourse of deterrence by denial by Nasrallah starting 1996 specifically served the purpose of “controlling” rather than “escalating” the situation, as earlier explained.

In sum, the following figure summarizes Nasrallah’s pattern of deterrence discourse which alternated between immediate and general deterrence, by punishment and by denial. This illustration is a reproduction of the analysis which had been taking place throughout. It summarizes the four different events between Hezbollah and Israel on the lines of deterrence. Respectively, and in response to every event illustrated in the figure, Nasrallah’s discourse was shaped differently.

Event/Time Period	1992 Assassination of Abbas Al Mussawi	1993 Operation Accountability	1996 Operation Grapes of Wrath	1996-1999 Military Activity within the "Rules of the Game"	2000 Israeli Withdrawal
Nasrallah's Respective Discursive Replies	Immediate Deterrence by Punishment	Immediate Deterrence by Punishment	Deterrence by Denial	Deterrence by Denial	General Deterrence by Denial
Speech Excerpts	*"We should tell him: If you attack us, we will use our Katyushas; if you do not attack us, we will not use our Katyushas…"*	*"The Katyusha bombardment has led to a new formula based on mutual forced displacement, mutual destruction, and equal terror."*	*"Striking Hezbollah has failed; ending the resistance by military means has failed."*	*"What is important, in the final analysis, is that the Israeli army has humiliated itself and lost its strongman image…"*	*"I tell you: Israel, which owns nuclear weapons and the strongest air fleets in the region, is feebler than a spider web- I swear to God."*

Table 2 The Pattern of Nasrallah's Deterrence Discourse Between the Years 1992 and 2000

4.7 Conclusion: Nasrallah Establishes the Silhouette of Discursive Deterrence Between 1992-2000

Eighteen years of guerilla warfare, coupled to heightened capabilities, tactics and strategies between the early years of 1992 and late 1996, until the year 2000, displayed how Hezbollah first, has had its military strategy develop, and second, how this development translated into a strategy of deterrence in practice and discourse. Really, under the command of Nasrallah, the party saw considerable military developments where hierarchy was established, units of different specializations were deployed, and intelligence power was amplified, thus shaping new

capabilities and developing a new discourse.[183] At the heart of these developments, inevitable to the creation of a discourse of deterrence were Katyusha rockets, without which little or no words from Nasrallah could impact. Indeed, "psychological operations" have become Nasrallah's discursive deterrence strategies from start to end during this period.

In fact, this era saw Nasrallah's earliest deterrence attempts, thus creating a preliminary silhouette of his rhetorical deterrence strategies. The time frame 1992-2000 represented a time period where Hezbollah had been experiencing, for the very first time, direct warfare with Israel. Thus, Nasrallah, like Israeli officials, was still exploring effective ways to deter. At the end, Katyushas, which became Israel's unsustainable weapon, rescued Hezbollah's deterrence efforts, especially that the security zone lost its effectiveness upon the introduction of these weapons.[184]

Thus, to date, it was this very elementary weapon which ushered Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence and consequently, the new "rules of the game". With that said, Nasrallah's newly born discourse of deterrence proved to be growing incrementally and most importantly, in direct proportionality to the party's acquisition of significant and game-changing military capabilities. Next, the effectivity of Nasrallah's discursive silhouette, and its development, will be put to test after Israeli withdrawal.

[183] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[184] Kaye, Dalia Dassa. "The Israeli decision to withdraw from southern Lebanon: Political leadership and security policy." *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 4 (2002): 561-585.

Chapter Five

Deterrence in Transition: Nasrallah's Shy Discourse of Deterrence After Israeli Withdrawal

5.1 Introduction

After Israel finalized its complete withdrawal from Southern Lebanon in 2000, except from the disputed territories of the Shebaa farms,[185] Hezbollah and the latter were to discover a new landscape for deterrence. In fact, this landscape, whose only legitimate theatre for limited raids has become the Shebaa farms itself, was governed by the "rules of the game" set in place by 1996. However, soon enough, what began as a solid set of rules, to be respected by both parties, soon transformed into a volatile agreement, especially with the exacerbation of international and regional geopolitical events over time. Indeed, prime occurrences like Bush's aggressive foreign policy after 9/11, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, resolution 1559 in 2004, and the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005, have all transformed into catalysts which forced Israel, like Hezbollah, to work against, or stretch, the "rules of the game" by 2006. Meanwhile, however, Hezbollah, by taking advantage of the long-term truce, was reorganizing and remilitarizing in the shadows of the "rules of the game".[186]

[185] Kaufman, Asher. "Who owns the Shebaa Farms? Chronicle of a territorial dispute." *The Middle East Journal* (2002): 576-595.
[186] Azani, Eitan. *Hezbollah: the story of the party of God: from revolution to institutionalization*. Springer, 2011.

Next, to understand Nasrallah's discursive and deterrence responses to the precipitating events prior to the 2006 war, and amid the working "rules of the games" in the background of events, the transition years of 2001-2005 will be divided into two major time frames. While the first time period will look into the events between 2001 and early 2004, the second time period will analyze the catalyzation of events between 2004 and 2005 inclusive. In fact, this division depends in great part on two factors. The first factor looks into the geopolitical relocation of the US vis a vis the Middle East at large, thus Hezbollah, as in the years 2001-2003. The second factor looks into the US's and Israel's repositioning in Lebanon vis a vis Hezbollah in particular as in the years 2004 and 2005.

Along both sections, Nasrallah's and Hezbollah's replies of deterrence will be analyzed based on the discursive fluctuations between extended deterrence, i.e. towards the defender (US), and central deterrence, i.e. towards the protégé (Israel), by denial or by punishment. Put differently, while extended deterrence touches on Nasrallah's deterrence attempts vis a vis threats coming from Israel's ally, central deterrence addresses the direct deterrence relationship between Israel and Hezbollah per se. This chapter seeks to examine, chiefly, the reasons behind Nasrallah's rhetorical transitions between extended and central deterrence.

In fact, the focus on the transition between extended and central deterrence stems from the importance of analyzing the adaptivity of Nasrallah's discourse to the exacerbation of international and regional events. Really, for the first time after Hezbollah's inception, the party was facing heightened political pressures emanating from the US more directly than Israel. Therefore, analyzing the variances in Nasrallah's rhetorical replies to both parties remains

inevitable to understanding the adaptivity of the latter's discourse during the transition years. In reality, as explained next, within the shreds of a turbulent geopolitical landscape, Nasrallah's discourse expressed a minimum required level of adaptivity to the unfolding events.

5.2 The Scene in South Lebanon After Israeli Withdrawal: The Brief Continuity of the "Rules of the Games"

After Israel completed its total withdrawal from the South of Lebanon, Hezbollah, rather than the national Lebanese army took control over the Southern borders.[187] Hence, Hezbollah transformed into a quasi-autonomous military force which demarcated, through an imposed equation of deterrence, between the Northern Israeli borders and the Southern Lebanese territories. Adding to the demarcation imposed by achieved deterrence, the blue line, as per the terms of the UN resolution 425, delimited both borders and was safeguarded by the United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL).[188] Yet, although withdrawal was declared complete by the United Nations (UN) on June 16, 2000, Hezbollah still claimed Israeli partial withdrawal especially that the Shebaa farms were still under the latter's occupation.[189] In fact, precluded from the withdrawal line, or the blue line, were the Shebaa farms, an area which had been inherently disputed over between Syria, Lebanon and Israel likewise, since at least 1967.[190] Claimed by Hezbollah to be part of Lebanese territory, along with subtle Lebanese and Syrian approval, Hezbollah asserted its resistance to be legitimate.[191] Therefore, the Shebaa farms in

[187] Norton, Augustus Richard. *Hezbollah: A Short History-Updated Edition*. Vol. 53. Princeton University Press, 2014.
[188] Sobelman, Daniel. *New Rules of the Game: Israel and Hizbollah after the Withdrawal from Lebanon*. Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 2004.
[189] Kaufman, Asher. "Who owns the Shebaa Farms? Chronicle of a territorial dispute." *The Middle East Journal* (2002): 576-595.
[190] Kaufman, 576.
[191] Kaufman, 577.

particular became Hezbollah's new raison d'être.[192] Put differently, this area became the latter's best pretext to continue its armed struggle against Israel, thus avoiding first, the alienation of domestic support and second, the loss of minimum required international recognition.[193] Truly, by then, two factors, the Shebaa farms and the blue line have defined, greatly, Hezbollah's military and deterrence comportment after Israeli withdrawal.

Actually, the unilateral Israeli withdrawal, after years of skirmishes since its first invasion in 1978, kept both parties hanging to the "rules of the game" set during their final combat in 1996. In reality, with the blue line and Israel's occupation of the Shebaa farms, these rules were refashioned, but in the outlook, to suit the new geographical repositioning of both parties. How? First, like in the period between 1996 and 2000, Hezbollah, after withdrawal, deliberately confined its attacks to non-civilian targets, and only against the IDF, thus abstaining from launching Katyusha rockets directly into Northern Israeli territories. Thus, in clear abidance to the "rules of the game", civilians were spared from confrontations and Hezbollah focused its attacks around limited cross-border raids throughout the Shebaa farms, it being the security zone's substitute for Hezbollah's attacks. Indeed, by 2000, the Shebaa farms became the main theatre for periodic rounds of confrontations between both parties.[194] Most importantly, although restricted primarily to a small area equivalent to 25 square kilometers,[195] the paramilitary activities which Hezbollah held throughout were significant in terms of a deterrence strategy. Indeed, Hezbollah followed a well-defined script, i.e. the 1996 "rules of the game", which

[192] Meier, Daniel. "Hizbullah's Shaping Lebanon Statehood." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 29, no. 3 (2018): 515-536.
[193] Kaufman, Asher. "Who owns the Shebaa Farms? Chronicle of a territorial dispute." *The Middle East Journal* (2002): 576-595.
[194] Norton, Augustus Richard. *Hezbollah: A Short History-Updated Edition*. Vol. 53. Princeton University Press, 2014.
[195] Prados, Alfred B. "The Shib'a Farms Dispute and its Implications." Congressional Research Service [Library of Congress], 2001.

determined the magnitude and the proportionality of its attacks and retaliations until 2006. In this vein, Nasrallah, on May 6, 2007, explained the party's activities in the Shebaa farms as per the following:

> *"What was the Resistance's policy and strategy, from 2000 to July 12, 2006?... Our responsibility and our job is to thwart any Israeli aggression on our territories... There is the Shebaa Farms, a very small area. We used to carry out an operation once in a while and call it a reminder…We will [continue to] conduct reminder operations."*[196]

Markedly, the period following Israeli withdrawal owed little resemblance to its precursor. While the period between 1992 and 2000 was characterized by direct confrontations between Hezbollah and Israel, the period between 2000 and 2005 was overwhelmingly dominated by regional and international events which by themselves posed a major challenge to the fragile state of deterrence between both parties. Really, although deterrence, in its most minimalist approach, depends in great part on the parties trying to instate their deterrence posture, it is also dependent, to a reasonable extent, upon "recent experiences" between states not necessarily participating directly in a conflict, but affecting the parties involved.[197] Put differently, the relationship of Israel, like Hezbollah, with other regional or international states defines, in considerable part, their respective comportments towards their allies and adversaries likely.

[196] Nasrallah Hassan, Interview, May 6, 2007.
[197] Issa, Alaa. "Regional dynamics and deterrence: the middle east." *Contemporary Security Policy* 25, no. 1 (2004): 202-208.

Since this specific time period (2000-2005) saw the precipitation of unprecedented international military and political developments, the "rules of the game", upon which the deterrence status quo between both parties has been operating, was threatened by incoming regional and international pressures. Therefore, the deterrence relationship between Hezbollah and Israel ought to be debunked in light of a changing geopolitical landscape.

Truly, Israel's operations with Hezbollah were "strictly defensive" throughout this period,[198] while the greatest political and military pressures on Hezbollah propagated from the US more than Israel itself. Put differently, first, the events of 9/11, followed by the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 shaped the US's changing foreign policy towards the region of the Middle East. Second, resolution 1559 in 2004, the assassination of Hariri and Syrian withdrawal in 2005 reshuffled the cards of US and Israeli priorities in Lebanon and against Hezbollah. Therefore, the political play during this period, and its possible military consequences, posed the biggest challenge to Hezbollah. In fact, the conflict which erupted after Israeli withdrawal in 2000 was one which confronted Hezbollah predominantly by proxy until 2006.

Meanwhile, Hezbollah, first, through Nasrallah's "reminder operations", and second, Israel, through its defensive retaliations, operated their respective military activities across the border within the "rules of the game". Thus, building on the following, this chapter will proceed by explaining how Nasrallah's discursive deterrence pattern evolved to adapt to the precipitating regional events, in the shadows of the "rules of the game" and on the lines of extended

[198] Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to deter: deterrence failure and success in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, 2006–16." *International security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-196.

deterrence between 2001 and 2003, and on the lines of central deterrence between 2004 and 2005.

5.3 Nasrallah's Discursive Responses to the Events of 2001 and 2003: Threat Perception and Nasrallah's Discourse of Extended Deterrence

5.3.1 The Conflict-Deterrence Status Between 2001-2003: The US's Repositioning vis a vis the Middle East

In fact, although the period prior to Israeli withdrawal was undeniably affected by geopolitics, the extent to which the period after withdrawal was engulfed by heightened international pressures was considerably different. In reality, mounting tension on Hezbollah, during these years, did not come, in very particular terms, from Israel itself as before withdrawal, but from its closest ally, the US.[199] Indeed, after the events of 9/11, George Bush adopted a strategy of counterterrorism on a world scale, thus Hezbollah, as further explained next. Amid this rising war, Hezbollah's status as a "terrorist group", in the eyes of the US, had already seen its very first roots the 1980s and the 1990s when Hezbollah affiliates carried multiple attacks against the US such as the bombing of the US marines in Beirut, followed by the suicide attacks in Argentina respectively.[200] Hence, in this new war on terrorism, the status of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization was amplified greatly. On these lines, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage had described, in 2003, the party of Hezbollah to be the *"A-Team of Terrorists' and maybe al-Qaeda is actually the 'B' team."*[201]

[199] Addis, Casey L. *Hezbollah: Background and Issues for Congress*. Diane Publishing, 2011.
[200] Hajjar, Sami G. *Hizballah: Terrorism, National Liberation, or Menace?*. DIANE Publishing, 2002.
[201] "Hezbollah: 'A-Team Of Terrorists.'" CBS News. CBS Interactive, April 18, 2003. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/hezbollah-a-team-of-terrorists/.

To understand Nasrallah's discourse vis a vis the US, Danilovic's definition of extended deterrence demonstrates the actors involved in the game of deterrence through the following terms.[202] Based on this definition, Hezbollah is the challenger (party A), while Israel is the protégé (party B), and the US is the defender (party C). Therefore, and knowing that the US was repositioning vis a vis the Middle East at large, in this basic equation, party A shall deter party C, thus party B respectively.

Markedly, as per the definition provided by Danilovic, there exists a strategic interdependence between the US and Israel. Thus, and as interdependence in strategy and interests dictates, to a large extent, the comportment of allied states, both of these states become, by transitivity, willing to wage a war against their common targets.[203] Hence, and as the US had drawn a linkage between Hezbollah and terrorism in general, this policy further ushered the appetite of Hezbollah's number one adversary, Israel. However, this appetite was remained suppressed until 2006, before which the US led the political and military game against terrorism, thus Hezbollah. Indeed, after 9/11, and Bush's accusations of Hezbollah's terrorist aspirations of "global reach", Hezbollah fell into the circles of the US's zealous speculations about the latter's dangers to US and Israeli security.[204]

Resultantly, in terms of deterrence, the relationship between the US, Israel and Hezbollah is understood through the following. First, vis a vis the defender and the protégé, Hezbollah is the

[202] Danilovic, Vesna. "The sources of threat credibility in extended deterrence." *Journal of conflict resolution* 45, no. 3 (2001): 341-369.
[203] Weede, Erich. "Extended deterrence by superpower alliance." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 27, no. 2 (1983): 231-253.
[204] Hajjar, Sami G. *Hizballah: Terrorism, National Liberation, or Menace?*. DIANE Publishing, 2002.

challenger towards Israel first, and second, the US, by transitivity. Hence, the rhetoric of deterrence of Nasrallah shall deter, extendedly, Israel through the US, at least on the two grand events led by the US and elaborated next. Building on this premise, the following section proceeds by analyzing thr deterrence discourse of Nasrallah with respect to the unfolding events of 2001 and 2003.

5.3.2 The Events of 9/11: Nasrallah's Messages of Extended Deterrence on the Eve of a "Global War on Terrorism"

The countdown for a long-term US-led war against terrorism began with a turning point event which hit the world hard after the cold war: Al Qaeda's series of successful suicide attacks on different US capitals on September 11, 2001. Indeed, these attacks have been the most atrocious and horrific of all known non-state terrorist group assaults in modern history. For instance, although in 1993 the World Trade Center in New York city had as well been bombarded but with explosives, the hijacking of aircrafts in 2001 to perform the attack was highly transformational in nature and became a precedent in the history of terrorist attacks.[205] Truly, for the first time, this unparalleled terrorist campaign had put the US's national security and its homeland in great peril. Therefore, and because of the attack's considerable success and intolerable magnitude, President George Bush and his administration hurriedly opted for a new security strategy which he called "the war on terror".[206] As he affirmed, *"our war on terror*

[205] Ilardi, Gaetano Joe. "The 9/11 attacks—a study of Al Qaeda's use of intelligence and counterintelligence." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 3 (2009): 171-187.
[206] Salamey, Imad. *The government and politics of Lebanon*. Routledge, 2013.

begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated."[207]

In this new "war on terror", Hezbollah has been prioritized as a potential target, aside a large number of other terrorist organizations.[208] Indeed, by then, Bush had already declared Hezbollah as a terrorist organization of "global reach".[209] Not surprisingly, the US's war on terrorism incorporated, to a large extent, Israel's war on Hezbollah. Resultantly, while the 1996 agreement had implicitly denominated Hezbollah as a legitimate resistance movement, with the consent of participating parties, especially Israel, the events of 2001 made of Hezbollah an organization of unquestionable terrorist aspirations.[210]

Indeed, immediately after the 9/11 events, and having considered the possible and severe repercussions of Al Qaeda's attacks on US and Israeli foreign policy, Hezbollah halted its military activities across the border line with Israel, before resuming again in October 2001.[211] Actually, by November 2001, the US had sent a congressional delegation to Lebanon for the purpose of discussing the dangers of Hezbollah's military status, and most importantly, to understand the prospects for containing its threat towards the US and Israel. Indeed, this delegation negotiated several deals with the Lebanese government for the purpose of thwarting

[207] National Archives and Records Administration.https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html.
[208] Levitt, Matthew. "Hezbollah: A case study of global reach." *Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies (CSS)* (2003).
[209] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[210] Harik, Judith Palmer. *Hezbollah: The changing face of terrorism*. Ib Tauris, 2005.
[211] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.

Hezbollah's economic, political and military capabilities, it being on Bush's "war on terror" agenda.[212]

By 9/11, the US sought reassess the tactical, logistical and financial support granted to terrorist organizations, of which is Hezbollah. Yet, Hezbollah's refusal to negotiate a new settlement further exacerbated the conflict between it and the US. Really, knowing that the latter had carried several oversees terrorist operations against the US and its allies, as earlier illustrated, the crossover between Hezbollah's "resistance status" and its "terrorist aspirations" was lost in US and most Western circles.[213] Hence, by 9/11, the US delegation sought to take back guarantees concerning the scope of Hezbollah's military activities in the future. Hence, in reply to the US's moves, Nasrallah, in a November 2001 press interview, directed his messages of deterrence to the US. On these lines, the two excerpts illustrated below underpin Nasrallah's extended deterrence replies.

"After September 11, the United States thought that we would be scared to death, so they sent us intermediaries with the hope that after September 11 we would be willing to give up what we had previously refused [to give up]… Of course, we rejected all these proposals because we believed them to be nothing but a political bomb meant to destroy Hezbollah…"[214]

[212] Harik, Judith Palmer. *Hezbollah: The changing face of terrorism*. Ib Tauris, 2005.
[213] Levitt, Matthew. "Hezbollah: A case study of global reach." *Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies (CSS)* (2003).
[214] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.

"We need to stress that our options and positions have not changed after September 11 and will not change in the future from what they were prior to September 11."[215]

Truly, in both excerpts, Nasrallah is denying Hezbollah's distress towards the events of 9/11 and their impact on Hezbollah's military and resistance policy. Nasrallah was expressing assertiveness and determination to proceed in his policy of resistance. In fact, Hezbollah in general and Nasrallah in particular firmly believed that the US was to take advantage of the events of 9/11 to destroy Hezbollah's military ability to defeat Israel.[216] Therefore, Nasrallah's rhetorical extended deterrence attempts were purposefully created to play down US initiatives at delimiting Hezbollah's military structure and capabilities. Resultantly, Nasrallah reaffirmed Hezbollah's unchanging stances on the lines of resisting and deterring Israel.

As extended deterrence dictates, Nasrallah's messages were addressing Israel's number one ally, the US, which began orchestrating the political play against Hezbollah. Indeed, Nasrallah deliberately extended his discourse of deterrence to reject and deny US proposals vis a vis Hezbollah. Thus, by reaffirming Hezbollah's unchanging stances, in what concerns resistance and politics, Nasrallah squashed all US attempts at converging between its interests and that of his party. Resultantly, renewed tension between both the US and Hezbollah began to escalate.

Only two years after the events of 9/11, the US performed its direct invasion in the Middle East through Iraq, in a clear indication of a changing political and military map in the region. In fact, while the pressures on Hezbollah by 9/11 were overwhelmingly political, the US's invasion

[215] Noe, 260.
[216] Noe, 257.

of Iraq transformed political pressure into military direct action, thus holding both political and military repercussions on the organization of Hezbollah. Indeed, starting with the Bush Doctrine in 2002 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, Hezbollah and Nasrallah recalculated the dangers and challenges imposed on the future of resistance movements, especially after the US's direct military invasion in the region. In reply, and as illustrated below, Nasrallah created a discourse which intercepted heightened alertness with extended deterrence.

5.3.3 The US Invasion of Iraq in 2003: Nasrallah's Communication of Alertness and the Discourse of Extended Deterrence

Nasrallah's efforts of denial towards the US by 9/11 have been further bolstered by heightened alertness and greater commitment to deterrence in his discourse by 2003. Why? In reality, by 2002, Bush's aggressive foreign policy towards the Middle East began taking a clearer shape through the Bush Doctrine. Actually, in 2002, a year before the invasion of Iraq, the Bush doctrine was announced to stress that "the United States had the unilateral right to engage in preventive war to eliminate potential future threats,"[217] thus reinstalling US hegemony and security to Israel in the Middle East. Indeed, in this strategy, states perceived to threaten the security of the US and its allies fell under the category of "rogue states".[218] Within this category of states were Iraq first, and Syria second.[219] Undoubtedly, it was primarily through Syrian hegemony in Lebanon that Hezbollah preserved its political and military privileges. For instance, while by the ratification of the Taif agreement in 1989, all militias were ordered disarmament,

[217] Neack, Laura. *The new foreign policy: complex interactions, competing interests*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013.
[218] Litwak, Robert S., and Robert Litwak. *Rogue states and US foreign policy: containment after the Cold War*. Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2000.
[219] Henriksen, Thomas H. "The rise and decline of rogue states." *Journal of International Affairs* (2001): 349-373.

Hezbollah's military wing was safeguarded by Syria's working alliance with the latter.[220] As a result, any US aggression against the axis of Iran-Syria-Hezbollah, which could begin through the invasion of Iraq, will have deep repercussions on Hezbollah's well-being and resistance status. Knowing that Iran vowed to support the US in Iraq, the latter's refusal came to foster the evil status of the "resistance axis" as a means to recreate and democratize the Middle East.

Shortly after the 9/11 events and the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 represented the very first direct symptom of a changing and aggressive US foreign policy towards the Middle East. Thus, the deterrence calculus of Hezbollah evolved to adapt to the changing US policies. In reality, extended deterrence only succeeds when the challenger, i.e. Hezbollah, is convinced that the defender, i.e. the US, is willing to incur high costs on the challenger's hostility vis a vis the protégé, i.e. Israel.[221] Really, when the challenger is uncertain about the willingness of the defender to pursue action in favor of the protégé, the deterrence posture between the defender, the challenger and the protégé is equally weakened.[222] At minimum, by 9/11, the prospects of the US's aggressive agenda remained incomplete, but by 2003, the US's policy towards the targets at stake unfolded. Hence, by 2003, alertness gradually began to intercept extended deterrence in Nasrallah's discourse.

Finally, in 2003, the Bush administration staged the second Gulf war by invading Iraq. The events of 9/11 have been Bush's main impetus for legitimizing a new war in the Middle East for

[220] Hinnebusch, Raymond. "Pax-Syriana? The origins, causes and consequences of Syria's role in Lebanon." *Mediterranean Politics* 3, no. 1 (1998): 137-160.
[221] Johnson, Jesse C., Brett Ashley Leeds, and Ahra Wu. "Capability, credibility, and extended general deterrence." *International Interactions* 41, no. 2 (2015): 309-336.
[222] Huth, Paul K. "Extended deterrence and the outbreak of war." *American Political Science Review* 82, no. 2 (1988): 423-443.

a multiplicity of geopolitical and geostrategic interests, all of which fell under the slogan of antiterrorism and democratization.[223] Through this foreign policy, Bush was anticipating for a "New Middle East" where "rogue states" shall be transformed into essentially "democratic countries" capable of coexisting and recreating peace with Israel.[224] To establish this vision, Iraq was the US's first shot to fulfilling the agenda of the "New Middle East" in the region. Thus, on the lines of deterrence and warfare, the "New Middle East", ushered by the invasion of Iraq, can be understood as an attempt at expanding, through "democratization", the military and political base of US hegemony in the region vis a vis its protégé, Israel.[225] Really, regime change in Iraq, through the uprooting of Hussein, is more likely believed to have been the beginning of an "ambitious plan" to recalibrate power balances vis a vis Israeli security in the Middle East.[226]

Thus, by ameliorating the political and military stances of Israel and the US in the region, the incentives to boost and solidify the deterrence posture of Israel itself, vis a vis its adversaries, thus Hezbollah, are more likely to multiply. Based on the following, Nasrallah's rhetorical moves of deterrence have been shaped. A week before occupation in 2003, and based on the new givens elaborated above, Nasrallah expressed sharp alertness in his discourse. Truly, Nasrallah communicated sincere fears about the future of the Middle East, its resistance movements and its populace. Thereby, only when threats to Hezbollah began to materialize through a direct US intervention in the region that Nasrallah began to call for political and military alertness and

[223] Hinnebusch, Raymond. "The American invasion of Iraq: causes and consequences." *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* 12, no. 1 (2007): 9-27.
[224] Ottaway, Marina, Nathan J. Brown, Amr Hamzawy, Karim Sadjadpour, and Paul Salem. *The New Middle East*. Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008.
[225] Hinnebusch, Raymond. "The American invasion of Iraq: causes and consequences." *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* 12, no. 1 (2007): 9-27.
[226] Waxman, Dov. "From Jerusalem to Baghdad? Israel and the War in Iraq." *International Studies Perspectives* 10, no. 1 (2009): 1-17.

mobilization. At minimum, the invasion of Iraq was the US's very first direct intervention in the region by the demise of the cold war. Thus, on these lines, Nasrallah stated the following:

"People in Lebanon should not be unconcerned by the dangers threatening the region, and we shall not deceive them by denying them the truth… We should remain on the alert with all that it entails from the point of view of readiness for various eventualities, and stay politically, publicly, psychologically, morally, and militarily aware of developments."[227]

Indeed, Hezbollah became aware that its status as a resistance became at the heart of the challenges imposed by the Bush doctrine vested in the invasion of Iraq. Consequently, and knowing that Syria and Hezbollah became at the center of US suspicions, Nasrallah replied by augmenting the magnitude of the threat communicated. On these lines, Nasrallah proceeded by stating the following:

"The American war on Iraq and the region will not weaken our resolve; let Sharon not imagine for a minute that the sight on television of his warplanes and missiles, which he could drop on any Arab country anytime he chooses, can scare or deter us from confronting another of his attacks."[228]

"From this place we, we declare our condemnation of this diabolical, arrogant, and Zionist administration, and say: Do not expect the people of this region to meet you with flowers,

[227]Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[228] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.

rice and perfume; peoples of this part of the world will receive you, rather, with guns, blood, weapons, and martyrdom operations."[229]

Actually, a close inspection of the first excerpt suggests that Nasrallah was not only deterring extendedly the US, but Israel likewise. Indeed, Nasrallah is addressing the protégé through the defender, thus interchangeably. If this were to indicate a fact, it shows that Nasrallah is, to a certain extent, aware of the rising pressures which could propagate equally from the US like Israel in the future. Indeed, by placing the US and Israel within the same boundaries of threat perception, Nasrallah is deterring the defender and the protégé equally and not independently, especially that they are both equally perceived to impose a threat on Hezbollah.

Truly, in both excerpts, despite Nasrallah's poetic deterrence attempts, the latter is acknowledging the intertwinement of interests between the US and Israel vis a vis the future of the Middle East at large. Now, with this different approach in discourse, Nasrallah is readjusting his strategy of rhetorical deterrence to address a twin enemy, the protégé and the defender likewise.

In short, in the eyes of Hezbollah itself, it was evident to most of its decisionmakers and to Nasrallah in particular, that the US occupation will definitely mark a new beginning for Israeli-Arab relationships.[230] Thereby, on these lines, Nasrallah, on April 22, 2003, after occupation, announced the following:

[229] Noe, 285.
[230] Chayban, Badih. "Nasrallah: War Has Nothing to Do with Saddam's Regime." The Daily Star Newspaper - Lebanon, n.d. http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2003/Feb-08/37577-nasrallah-war-has-nothing-to-do-with-saddams-regime.ashx.

"We are currently facing a number of catastrophic outcomes. There is the occupation of Iraq, American and Israeli arrogance…We are also facing a new wave of American and Israeli threats against Syria, Iran, Lebanon, and resistance movements in Palestine and Lebanon. This is the new reality we are facing today."[231]

As the excerpt suggests, Nasrallah acknowledged the catastrophic repercussions of the US operation in the region. Indeed, Nasrallah's firm conviction of "US-Zionist" plots at reconstructing the region's map has obligated Hezbollah to recalculate the costs and benefits of a new landscape for resistance and deterrence more actively than ever before.

5.3.4 Analyzing Nasrallah's Discourses of Extended Deterrence Between 2001 and 2003

In short, between 2001 and 2003, threats on Hezbollah have been progressively mounting. By 2003, and based on the new givens elaborated above, Nasrallah communicated the message of readiness and commitment to deterrence, after bluntly denying US proposals in 2001. In reality, the challenger's estimate for the need to deter or not depends in great part on the defender's commitment to pursue action in favor of the protégé.[232] Therefore, between 2002 and 2003, when the "interconnectedness of interests" between the defender and the protégé, became clearer to the challenger,[233] i.e. Hezbollah, only then did Nasrallah confront his relative respite after Israeli withdrawal, in favor of alertness. Hence, the speech which Nasrallah delivered in

[231] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[232] Stein, Janice Gross. "Extended deterrence in the Middle East: American strategy reconsidered." *World Politics* 39, no. 3 (1987): 326-352.
[233] Stein, 377.

2003 confirmed Nasrallah's anticipation of the new reality and its dangers on Hezbollah and its allies, especially Syria.

The introduction of a relatively novel challenge by the defender itself by 2001 made the confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah post withdrawal much dissimilar from the confrontation which Hezbollah faced in the period pre-2000. In fact, in the years after withdrawal, the "rules of the game" were, on one hand, well-functioning, at least in what concerns the Hezbollah-Israeli military activities across the borderline.[234] Yet, on the other hand, the direct US intervention in the region imposed an unconventional challenge to Hezbollah away from the traditional confrontation between it and Israel. Hence, and as mirrored in Nasrallah's discourse, this novel confrontation considerably drifted Nasrallah's messages of deterrence from Israel per se and towards the US.

In reality, while extended deterrence appeared sporadically on the major events elaborated above, it was not until 2005 that Nasrallah staged a comeback to rhetorical central deterrence and confronted the Israelis directly. Thus, next, and adding to Nasrallah's discursive contribution to extended deterrence, the chapter proceeds by analyzing the latter's approach to rhetorical central deterrence vis a vis Israel, knowing that Israel remains Hezbollah's only direct and potent threat. However, as evidence suggests, Nasrallah did not excel at communicating credible and militarily translatable threats vis a vis Israel during these transition years, as explained below.

[234] Sobelman, Daniel. *New Rules of the Game: Israel and Hizbollah after the Withdrawal from Lebanon*. Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 2004.

5.4 Nasrallah's Discursive Responses to the Events of 2004-2005: A Discourse of Central Deterrence Against Israel for the First Time in Five Years

5.4.1 The Conflict-Deterrence Status Between 2004-2005: Resolution 1559 and the Start for Ending the 1996 "Rules of the Game"

After the US's invasion of Baghdad in 2003, Bush's new hardline policy worked proactively on deflating threats to Israeli security. Thereby, in the que of US targets was Syria after Iraq. For instance, in 2003, Syria refused to grant US troops in Iraq military or political support, unlike the support it had granted the latter in the first Gulf war in 1990.[235] Hence, along the lines of the US's changing policy in the Middle East, and as rifts between the US and Syria increased, the former looked to punish Syria in its "weak spot", Lebanon.[236] Actually, Syria was accused of supporting terrorist organizations, especially Hezbollah, whose activities hindered the development of peace with Israel, at least as per the plan of the "New Middle East".[237] Thus, Syria's relationship with the US had incredibly worsened. Resultantly, the conflict between both parties epitomized in 2004 when the US and France, with the support of Hariri, lobbied intensively for the passage of resolution 1559 by the UNSC.[238]

[235] Perry, Walter L., Richard E. Darilek, Laurinda L. Rohn, and Jerry M. Sollinger. *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Decisive War, Elusive Peace*. No. RAND/RR-1214-A. RAND ARROYO CENTER SANTA MONICA CA SANTA MONICA United States, 2015.
[236] Hinnebusch, Raymond. "The American invasion of Iraq: causes and consequences." *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* 12, no. 1 (2007): 9-27.
[237] Ottaway, Marina, Nathan J. Brown, Amr Hamzawy, Karim Sadjadpour, and Paul Salem. *The New Middle East*. Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008.
[238] Dionigi, Filippo. *Hezbollah, Islamist politics, and international society*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Actually, resolution 1559 displayed the tenets of a new US strategy vis a vis Syria, Hezbollah and Lebanon. On these lines, the resolution called first, for the withdrawal of foreign forces outside Lebanese, i.e. the Syrian troops. Second, it called for the disarmament of all militias, i.e. a direct indication to Hezbollah.[239] At this point, Hezbollah's armed wing has become in the spotlight. Thereby, Hezbollah's prime object became to protect its military structure from the provisions of disarmament.[240] According to a speech delivered by Nasrallah on April 13, 2005, he described resolution 1559 as per the following:

"The first article of Resolution 1559, which I call the French part of the resolution, demands the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, which implicitly means the Syrian troops. The second article of the resolution, which I call the American part, demands the dissolution and disarmament of all Lebanese militias-implicitly meaning the Lebanese resistance."[241]

"This settlement, which is openly biased towards Israel, to the detriment of Lebanon, France's old and constant friend, placed three major challenges all of a sudden to our country. These are: the Israeli enemy, which lurks across the border waiting the resistance to be disarmed; the international community, led single-handedly by the United States in the pre-emptive, so-called "war on terror" that has led to the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan; and internal stability which we must submit, has only contributed to an already agitated domestic situation."[242]

[239] Resolution 1559, n.d. http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1559.
[240] Alagha, Joseph. "Hizballah after the Syrian withdrawal." *Middle East Report* (2005): 34-39.
[241] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[242] Noe, 330.

Actually, the resolution exhibited the features of an emerging war on Hezbollah, on the lines of the "global war on terror". Interestingly, it was not Israel who was directly challenging Hezbollah's military legitimacy, but both Israel and the US through the international community. To Hezbollah's cadre, and to Nasrallah particularly, resolution 1559 was but a mere "Zionist plot" to weaken the resolve of Hezbollah's resistance activities. Interestingly, meanwhile, all Hezbollah-Israeli activities across the border line were still paradoxically functioning within the 1996 "rules of the game".

Finally, on February 14, 2005, a final shot, the assassination of prominent Hariri, after a number of assassination attempts against anti-Syrian public figures, was staged to completely break Lebanon's volatile stability. Resultantly, the country was divided vertically across two camps: a Hezbollah-led pro-Syrian camp (March 8) and an anti-Syrian camp (March 14).[243] At last, the Cedar revolution, triggered by the assassination of Hariri, gathered large crowds on March 14 to protest against Syria. As a result of large protest and heightened international pressures against the latter, Syrian troops, under the watch of the US's grip on the international community on one hand, and Hezbollah's powerlessness on the other, withdrew from Lebanon on April 26, 2005.[244] Truly, to facilitate Israel's task of enfeebling Hezbollah, the US began to confront the latter by proxy, and by placing great pressure on its patron, Syria.[245] By April of that same year, Syria had fully quit the Lebanese scene, leaving Hezbollah without direct hegemonic, but rather ideological coverage to confront a potent threat, Israel. By then, to sustain these rising

[243] Salamey, Imad. *The government and politics of Lebanon*. Routledge, 2013.
[244] Salamey, 67.
[245] Byman, Daniel. "Should Hezbollah be next?." *Foreign Affairs* (2003): 54-66.

challenges, Hezbollah ought to cope with internal and external pressures aimed at disarming it, especially resolution 1559 and its implications.[246]

With the success of the US's confrontation of Hezbollah through the "proxy strategy", Israel was able to reach the edge of its maximal political power, especially with the uttermost support which it had been granted by the US through the Bush doctrine. Thus, in terms of a deterrence strategy, the pendulum of deterrence between Israel and Hezbollah was now blatantly tilting to Israel's favor more than Hezbollah. At minimum, Israel, with a more friendly regional and international mood, has now earned the privilege to reset the plausibly working "rules of game" to its advantage. Thus, amid this new reality, Nasrallah, to absorb best the consecutive shocks on his party (resolution 1559, Hariri's assassination and Syrian withdrawal), readdressed Israel through a discourse of central deterrence for the first time in a while. Truly, as illustrated through a number of speech excerpts next, only when Hezbollah's security had been put in unparalleled jeopardy that Nasrallah recalibrated his discourse to address Israel explicitly.

5.4.2 March 2005: Nasrallah's Deterrence by Denial Response to the Assassination of Hariri

By 2005, as US-Israeli threats to Hezbollah have materialized greatly, Nasrallah, for the first time in five years since the year 2000, dedicated a noteworthy portion of his March 8 speech to deter Israel. On these lines, Nasrallah wholeheartedly formulated his message of deterrence towards Israel by denial. Not surprisingly, the strategy of denial has proven to be Nasrallah's most secure resort since 1996. In fact, through this strategy, where no explicit revelation of

[246] Azani, Eitan. *Hezbollah: the story of the party of God: from revolution to institutionalization*. Springer, 2011.

targets, weaponry or threats have been pronounced, the latter deterred through covertness and poetic language.[247] As demonstrated below, Nasrallah addressed Israel through consecutive messages of central deterrence and on the lines of denial throughout. In this vein, Nasrallah stated the following:

"My next message is to Israel, to Sharon, Mofaz and Shalom: forget whatever hopes and dreams you harbor about Lebanon; you have no place here among us in Lebanon."[248]

"In 1982, you were at the peak of your power, and we were just emerging from destruction; yet we fought and resisted you; we held fast, offered up many martyrs, and defeated you. Today, we Lebanese, thanks to our unity, willpower, army and resistance, are stronger than ever before, while you, the Israelis, are being defeated by the bare fists of our Palestinian brothers and sisters."[249]

"I swear to you, Zionists of Israel, that what you failed to achieve through war, by God, you will never be able to achieve through political means."[250]

As demonstrated, Nasrallah, whose party, after 5 years of Israeli withdrawal, has for the first time become most vulnerable to domestic and regional pressures, saw the need to readdress his discourse towards Israel. Thus, to reestablish Hezbollah's solid deterrence posture vis a vis the

[247] Matar, Dina. "Hassan Nasrallah: The cultivation of image and language in the making of a charismatic leader." *Communication, Culture & Critique* 8, no. 3 (2015): 433-447.
[248] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. London: Verso, 2007.
[249] Noe, 326.
[250] Noe, 326.

latter, Nasrallah resorted to discursive deterrence by denial. Hence, by denying Israel's capability to win over Hezbollah politically or militarily, Nasrallah was trying to boost Hezbollah's deterrence posture whose viable and working posture has been put under unparalleled stress.

However, the deterrence message communicated on the lines of denial offered but little on Hezbollah's readiness to confront any future attack. Instead, it provided romanticized headlines and subtle comparisons which do not translate directly into deterrent militarily terms at any point. Thus, although the discourse described is deterrent in the outlook, and demonstrates Nasrallah's firm convictions to deterring Israel, the discourse was still unelaborate on Hezbollah's actual military capability which constitutes an essential component of any effective deterrence message. Verily, the messages of deterrence by denial, which Nasrallah had been transmitting since the earliest days of combat with Israel, have always been intertwined with a psychological war of infiltration and intimidation.[251] In short, the excerpts are illustrative of Nasrallah's very first central deterrence attempts vis a vis Israel per se during the transition period. Clearly, through few sentences, Nasrallah readdressed Israeli decision makers, through the message of infiltration and deterrence by denial, more bluntly than before.

Nevertheless, the importance of these deterrence messages lies in the element of the time factor. Nasrallah's long rhetorical central deterrence break, which lasted until 2005, marks a wide schism in what concerns the requirements of consistency in discursive deterrence. Indeed, while deterring an adverse actor requires discursive consistency, thus matching words and

[251] Brennen, Lisa M. *Hezbollah: psychological warfare against Israel*. NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL MONTEREY CA, 2009.

deeds,[252] Nasrallah only revamped his discourse of deterrence vis a vis Israel about five years after its withdrawal, and yet very poorly. Thus, Nasrallah achieved an incomplete comeback to central deterrence, amid the absence of solid threats. Until 2005, Nasrallah, on most occasions, adopted a discourse which was expressive of regional developments, and thus formulated a discourse based on extended rather than central deterrence. Preoccupation with the running political developments shattered Hezbollah's focus within the shreds of a dynamic and fast changing landscape. With little doubt, until 2005, these fast and furious events distracted Nasrallah's discourse away from its most potent threat, Israel.

5.4.3 May 2005: Nasrallah's Deterrence by Denial Response to Syrian Withdrawal

After the ratification of the 1989 Taif agreement, which legitimized Syrian tutelage over Lebanon, Hezbollah saw in the latter's military and political hegemony a perfect shield for its paramilitary activities. For instance, never did Hezbollah equate Syria's presence in Lebanon to an "occupation" or a "colonial" force.[253] Instead, Syria's hegemony, which many Lebanese political parties had appraised, was yet most cherished by Hezbollah. However, with its withdrawal in April 2005, Hezbollah's heroic image, which was safeguarded by the latter, became at stake on two levels. First, Hezbollah had to fill the political vacuum caused by Syrian withdrawal, through an enshrinement of its political and governmental participation in Lebanese politics. Thus, in 2005, Hezbollah was represented in the Lebanese government for the first time.[254] Second, and on the lines of war and deterrence, Hezbollah ought to preserve the

[252] Wasser, Becca, Ben Connable, Anthony Atler, and James Sladden. "Comprehensive Deterrence Forum." (2018).
[253] Alagha, Joseph Elie. *The shifts in Hizbullah's ideology. Religious ideology, political ideology, and political program*. Amsterdam University Press, Leiden/Amsterdam, 2006.
[254] Ali, Mohanad Hage. *Power Points Defining the Syria-Hezbollah Relationship*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019.

legitimacy and structure of its resistance status against Israel. With Syria's withdrawal, Hezbollah lost direct hegemonic coverage for its military activities. Thus, Hezbollah was now to safeguard, through a strategic and ideological alliance with Syria, the latter's interests in Lebanon, politically first, and militarily second, against the US, Israel and their allies.[255] Resultantly, and building on these arising challenges, Hezbollah sought to adapt to the new reality vis a vis Israel and deterrence. Therefore, in response to these obstacles, Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence, after Syrian withdrawal, underwent a tactical maneuver explained next.

In fact, a second pivotal breakthrough in Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence can be traced in the latter's May 2005 speech. After Syrian withdrawal, Hezbollah was left alone stuck in the muds of an acute internal split, and most importantly, with a potent threat, Israel, threatening its security on the Southern Lebanese borders since the mid 1900s. Thus, to fix its posture, Hezbollah had to first neutralize its foremost existential threat, Israel, through deterrence. As a result, for the first time after Israeli withdrawal, in an attempt to reestablish rhetorical deterrence vis a vis the latter, Nasrallah revealed to the public a quantifiable estimate of its rocket arsenal.[256] On these lines, on a May 2005 speech, Nasrallah posited the following:

> *"They say the real number of our rockets is 12,000; but I say, with the commander's permission, that we have more than 12,000 rockets."*[257]

[255] Ali, 1.
[256] Devenny, Patrick. "Hezbollah's strategic threat to IsraeL." *Middle East Quarterly* (2006).
[257] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.

Indeed, as Hezbollah felt immense pressure, and as the flow of events became less controllable, and much more unpredictable, along with amplifying risks, Nasrallah tried to deter, not by issuing direct threats, but by articulating rocket capability. Although throughout the period between 2000 and 2006, its military capability was kept subtle, the above statement became Hezbollah's only public statement where Nasrallah made use of Hezbollah's arsenal to effectively deter Israel.[258]

Through this statement, Nasrallah denied Israel's estimates of Hezbollah's rocket arsenal and provided the public with the rather "real" estimates of these rockets. Thus, Nasrallah further confirmed Hezbollah's acquisition of a large batch of rockets. However, and since Nasrallah was only concerned in denying Israel's estimates, the discourse of deterrence by denial did not explicitly articulate potential targets. Truly, the unclear nature of the threats issued, and the absence of targets, due to Nasrallah's abidance to denial solely and not punishment, did but partially bolster Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence.

Yet, despite these shortcuts, finally, in 2005, Nasrallah had revamped, partially, the messages of central deterrence by denial into his discourse. Probably, in 2005, threats to its security have become more apparent than ever. What began in the US in 2001 vibrated in Lebanon in 2005. It was clear that the political and military landscape is now putting Hezbollah in a very critical situation, especially that pressures against Syria have been mounting exponentially. Really, in fear of any probable confrontation with Israel, amid Syrian withdrawal, Nasrallah needed to remind Israel about Hezbollah's commitment to resistance. Nevertheless, in the following, the

[258] Devenny, Patrick. "Hezbollah's strategic threat to IsraeL." *Middle East Quarterly* (2006).

reasons behind Nasrallah's partial fulfillment of the requirements of central deterrence are explained in detail.

5.4.4 Nasrallah Working Against the Rules of Central Deterrence Throughout: Amassing Military Power Tacitly Without a Translation into an Elaborate Discourse

During these transition years, Hezbollah began to exponentially grow in military power. Hezbollah moved from a position of "high mobility" and aggression, to one of "high fixation".[259] Put differently, while in pre-withdrawal years, Hezbollah was fighting to push the IDF soldiers outside Southern Lebanon through high mobility, Hezbollah was now working on consolidating its military posture to prevent Israel's possible return through rather high fixation. Indeed, adding to quotidian cross-border raids, especially in the Shebaa farms, Hezbollah was concerned in solidifying its strategies and military, at the core of which was the ability to strike within Israeli territory in any future confrontation.[260]

On these lines, Hezbollah's military footprint was expanding unrestrictedly. Its force buildup was based on two pillars. First, Hezbollah's strategy consisted of a high saturation of short, middle and long-range artillery. Second, Hezbollah worked on improving its organizational, logistical and command model.[261] By 2006, it had been reported that Hezbollah owned at least 12,000 rockets of diverse range strikes.[262] However, all these developments were unrevealed by

[259] Gabrielsen, Iver. "The evolution of Hezbollah's strategy and military performance, 1982–2006." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 2 (2014): 257-283.
[260] Kulick, Amir. "Hizbollah vs. the IDF: The Operational Dimension." *Strategic Assessment* 9, no. 3 (2006): 29-33.
[261] Kulick, 1.
[262] Samaan, Jean-Loup. "Missile warfare and violent non-state actors: the case of Hezbollah." *Defence studies* 17, no. 2 (2017): 156-170.

Nasrallah except for the basic rocket quantification which he provided in 2005. For instance, that same year, Nasrallah declared an important rocket policy which constituted the nucleus of Nasrallah's covert deterrence discourse prior to the 2006 war. In this vein, he stated the following:

> *"The real value of these rockets comes from the fact that they are in our hands, and that the Zionists know neither their number nor where they are deployed. They are fighting a hidden and an unseen enemy that could surprise them on any given day with this large number of rockets."*[263]

As the excerpt suggests, and as most, if not all of Nasrallah's speeches between 2000 and 2005 demonstrate, Hezbollah's strategic buildup, the accumulation of firepower, tactics and skills, were kept completely hidden and opaque, thus unrevealed through Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence. Why? In fact, to Hezbollah's taskforce, a considerable and commonly shared impression among its decision makers was Israel's intolerance for a second round of large-scale confrontations with Hezbollah. Truly, it was believed that Israel was sufficed with the 1996 "rules of the game" set in practice.[264] Building on this conviction, although Hezbollah was militarily reorganizing in the background, Nasrallah never translated Hezbollah's military transformation into an overt discourse of deterrence towards Israel. Truly, these military buildups were never revealed but practically and rhetorically on the eve the 34 days war. Meanwhile, Nasrallah deliberately refrained from communicating targeted threats to Israel.

[263] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[264] Matthews, Matt M. *We were caught unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli war*. DIANE Publishing, 2011.

On July 12, 2006, and as further explained in the next chapter, Hezbollah conducted a successful abduction operation, outside the Shebaa farms, in clear violation to the "rules of the game". Thus, that same day, and even when a large-scale Israeli retaliation became evident, Nasrallah refrained from communicating explicit threats to the latter. Instead, Nasrallah abided to subtleness in expression. Indeed, the excerpt illustrated below summarizes Nasrallah's rhetorical comportment until 2006. As he himself puts it into words on July 12, 2006, on the eve of the war:

"Lebanon today is not the same Lebanon 20 years ago…I do not need to make threats… you all know Hezbollah and its credibility."[265]

Truly, this animosity in threat communication governed Nasrallah's discourse throughout these years. Yet, as Freedman puts it, deterrence is both a psychological state of mind, and a strategic option.[266] For deterrence to succeed, a vigilant balance shall be set between both components. While the psychological component of deterrence is based primarily on the proper communication of threats, its strategic option lies in the military capability and the ability to deter effectively in the battlefield. As Nasrallah's discourse suggests, during this transition period, Nasrallah failed to communicate properly Hezbollah's military power, and thus failed at fulfilling the requirements of deterrence's psychological edge vis a vis Israel. Nevertheless, according to Jervis, neither leaders who are trying to contemplate or curb potential challenges,

[265] Nasrallah Hassan, Interview, July 12, 2006.
[266] Freedman, Lawrence. *Deterrence*. Polity, 2004.

always act as per the terms of the theory of deterrence.[267] In this case, Nasrallah failed to abide by the ABCs of deterrence. In other words, Nasrallah's refusal to communicate targeted and explicit threats further demeaned the efficacy of the deterrence message.

Most importantly, for deterrence to be effective, "capability cannot be kept a secret."[268] Thus, a reasonable amount of the party's military arsenal shall be revealed through communication. Really, if one of the parties in confrontation develops its military arsenal in all out secrecy, i.e. Hezbollah, then this development will not enhance the party's deterrent posture in any possible way.[269] With that said, and since Nasrallah kept its military developments a total secret, Hezbollah's deterrent force in the eyes of the IDF was, at least in terms of rhetoric, underdeveloped. Also, notwithstanding the fact that a party's military capability shall be revealed only reasonably and to a certain punitive extent, Hezbollah in general and Nasrallah in particular did not accomplish this psychological exercise.

5.5 An Overall Analysis of Nasrallah's Discursive Deterrence Pattern Between 2000-2005

Before concluding, the following table provides an illustration of the evolution of Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence during the years 2000-2005 with respect to the major events elaborated throughout. As the table suggests, the pattern of Nasrallah's deterrence rhetoric, which shifted from extended to central deterrence, was fairly adaptive to the different political and military

[267] Tanter, Raymond. "Psychology and Deterrence. By Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985. x, 270p. $27.50)." *American Political Science Review* 82, no. 1 (1988): 345-346.
[268] Dougherty, James E., and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff. *Contending theories of international relations*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1971.
[269] Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 374.

developments engulfing Hezbollah's strategies and options. In a nutshell, under the umbrella of general deterrence, while between 2001 and 2003 Nasrallah deterred the US extendedly, by 2005, the latter recalibrated his discourse to address Israel through central deterrence.

Event/Time Period	2001-2003 9/11, US Invasion of Iraq	2004-2005 Resolution 1559, Syrian Withdrawal from Lebanon
Type of Threat Issued by Nasrallah	Threat Exerted from the Defender	Threat Exerted from the Defender to the Greatest Advantage of the Protégé
Nasrallah's Respective Discursive Replies	Extended Deterrence	Central Deterrence by Denial
Speech Excerpts	*"Do not expect the people of this region to meet you with flowers, rice and perfume; peoples of this part of the world will receive you, rather, with guns, blood, weapons, and martyrdom operations."*	*"I swear to you, Zionists of Israel, that what you failed to achieve through war, by God, you will never be able to achieve through political means."*

Table 3 The Pattern of Nasrallah's Deterrence Discourse Between the Years 2001 and 2005

Markedly, on the level of central deterrence especially, Nasrallah's discourse remained shy. Really, never did Nasrallah communicate what Hezbollah's intolerable red lines were, nor did he communicate Hezbollah's military capabilities or possible targets elaborately at any instance.[270] In fact, Nasrallah's discourse little referred to the possibility of any future confrontation with Israel. Thus, the discrepancy between discourse and effective deterrence widened. Instead of

[270] Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to deter: deterrence failure and success in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, 2006–16." *International security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-196.

forging a comprehensive bond between deterrence and rhetoric, Nasrallah widened the gap between both.

Thereby, although the most basic framework of deterrence was acknowledged by the US, Israel and Hezbollah, Nasrallah had not developed his discursive deterrence strategies. At minimum, Nasrallah was convinced that Israel, like Hezbollah, saw in the "rules of the game" a working substitute to war for both parties. Hence, although the US's and Israel's threats to Hezbollah have boldened over time, Hezbollah did not communicate threats of equal magnitude and overtness. Paradoxically, Nasrallah abided to a minimalist discursive deterrence framework in a time when the "rules of the game" were being hunted by unparalleled political stress.

5.6 Conclusion: Nasrallah's Incomplete Discourse of Extended and Central Deterrence Between 2000-2005

In conclusion, Hezbollah and Nasrallah, after Israeli withdrawal, have been put before a novel landscape for general deterrence. Amid rising challenges, the discourse of Nasrallah had to adapt to the running political and military events. Actually, in the first period (2001-2003), Nasrallah's discourse of extended deterrence evolved to gradually incorporate heightened alertness and awareness to the dangers engulfing Hezbollah, especially as the US unfolded its aggressive foreign policy vis a vis the Middle East. In the second phase (2004-2005), Nasrallah's discourse of central deterrence, through denial exclusively, acknowledged the dangers surrounding its deterrence relationship with Israel, especially that Hezbollah was being hunted through political and paramilitary developments happening in its homeland, Lebanon. However,

meanwhile, until 2006, “business as usual” along the Shebaa borders had been functioning within normalcy amid these rising tensions.

Actually, the parameters of the “rules of the game”, by which Hezbollah’s activities on the Northern Israeli borders operated, only successfully absorbed the international and regional shockwaves until early 2006.[271] As the years moved closer to 2006, the “rules of the game” have proven to become increasingly fragile within a landscape of turbulent changes. Really, these rules suffered from two major obstacles. First, the regional and international arenas were crumbling down on terrorism, thus Hezbollah. Resultantly, while Hezbollah has been constrained greatly, Israel’s deterrence posture was gaining relative prominence over Hezbollah’s. Second, Nasrallah considerably failed at fostering the efficacy of the 1996 rules by the communication of deterrence by punishment through explicit threats. Instead, he abided to denial and mostly poetic language throughout.

At minimum, a well-structured and punitive discourse could have made the war which erupted few months later between both parties less likely.[272] Therefore, and adding to a turbulent political landscape, Nasrallah’s incomplete deterrence discourse further contributed to the demise of deterrence by 2006. Truly, for several reasons explained in the following chapter, by July 12, 2006, these rules failed completely.

[271] Sobelman, Daniel. "Four years after the withdrawal from Lebanon: refining the rules of the game." *Strategic Assessment* 7, no. 2 (2004): 2.
[272] Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to deter: deterrence failure and success in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, 2006–16." *International security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-196.

Chapter Six

Deterrence at War: Nasrallah Bolstering the Discourse of Deterrence by Punishment

6.1 Introduction

By early 2006, and within the mounting geopolitical events surrounding Hezbollah and Israel, military tension between both parties began growing outside the conventional realms of the "rules of the game". While until 2005, Hezbollah's sporadic skirmishes happened across the Shebaa farms solely, it being, with Israel's subtle approval, the legitimate theatre for Hezbollah's operations, the latter's abduction operation on July 12, 2006 happened outside the Shebaa farms area, thus clearly violating the parameters of the 1996 rules. Thus, Hezbollah provoked Israel, which, in turn, was surrounded by an incenting regional and international mood, to retaliate in large scale and beyond the "rules of the game" per se.

This chapter seeks to understand two main events. First, the chapter begins by analyzing the geopolitical atmosphere amid which Hezbollah in general and Nasrallah in particular carried the abduction operation which essentially happened outside the "rules of the game", thus resulting in the failure of deterrence. Second, the chapter continues by analyzing the synchronization between Hezbollah's military activities within the war days with respect to Nasrallah's rhetorical replies of narrow deterrence. Indeed, throughout the war days, Nasrallah, who has always been Hezbollah's first and foremost spokesman, became the only Hezbollah commander to deliver several consecutive, taped or televised speeches to address first, military developments and

second, Israel directly.[273] As explained throughout this chapter, Nasrallah's narrow deterrence replies during the 2006 war fluctuated essentially between deterrence by denial and by punishment. While punishment was tied to Hezbollah's rocket policy primarily, Nasrallah, resorted predominantly to deterrence by denial vis a vis Israel's ground campaigns. Finally, by the end of the war, Nasrallah's victory speech is analyzed in terms of the employment of general deterrence by denial.

6.2 Prelude to the 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War: The Demise of the "Rules of the Game" and Deterrence

6.2.1 Hezbollah Stretching the "Rules of the Game": Unanticipated Repercussions on the Deterrence Relationship Between Both Parties

Since Israeli withdrawal from Southern Lebanon in the year 2000, as explained in the previous chapter, the deterrence relationship between Hezbollah and Israel was governed by the 1996 "rules of the game" and was simultaneously engulfed by the regional and international political storms. Based on these rules, Hezbollah carried its paramilitary activities across the Shebaa farms with the IDF as its target. As a matter of fact, and since 2005 at least, Nasrallah had been overtly emphasizing Hezbollah's right in abductions to return its detained prisoners from Israeli jails.[274] Actually, Hezbollah's abduction operations throughout fell under Nasrallah's "al wa'd al-sadiq" or the "faithful promise". By definition, "al wa'd al-sadiq" was a bargaining mechanism unilaterally issued by Nasrallah, which, through the abduction of Israeli

[273] Hopkins, Rebecca Ann Gutow. "The role of rhetoric in legitimizing authority: the speeches of Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah during the 2006 War." PhD diss., 2012.
[274] شبكة الميادين." الميادين قناة. "2006: ما قبل الحرب - الجزء الأول, July 30, 2016.
https://www.almayadeen.net/episodes/723233/_2006-الحرب-قبل-ما.

soldiers, was launched for the purpose of bargaining against abducted IDF soldiers and thus returning Hezbollah prisoners.[275] Until 2006 exclusive, all of Hezbollah's military and abduction operations happened within the parameters set by the "rules of the game".

However, on the lines of Nasrallah's "faithful promise", on July 12, 2006, Hezbollah carried its third abduction attempt between 2000, 2005 and 2006,[276] thus successfully abducting two Israeli soldiers and killing eight others.[277] Yet, within only few hours, Hezbollah's abduction operation became the spark for the second Lebanon war. Why? At minimum, most, if not all of Hezbollah's cross border raids until July 12, 2006 exclusive did take place through the Shebaa farms and solely against the IDF. Therefore, in principle, these operations did fall within the strict parameters of the "rules of the game". However, Nasrallah's July 12 "faithful promise" stretched the "rules of the game" beyond the conventional operations which have been taking place over six years now. How?

In a clear violation to the "rules of the game", Hezbollah, for the first time after Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, carried its paramilitary operation outside the disputed area of the Shebaa farms and directly into Northern Israel.[278] Therefore, as Hezbollah launched its operation directly into the Israeli northern town of "Zarit",[279] and within a storm of political instability in

[275] Matthews, Matt M. *We were caught unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli war*. DIANE Publishing, 2011.
[276] "Hezbollah Attacks along Israel's Northern Border." mfa.gov.il. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d. https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/terrorism/hizbullah/pages/incidents along israel-lebanon border since may 2000.aspx.
[277] Feldman, Shai. "The Hezbollah-Israel War: A Preliminary Assessment." *Middle East Brief* 10, no. 2 (2006).
[278] Makovsky, David, and Jeffrey White. *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizballah war: A preliminary assessment*. Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006.
[279] Feldman, Shai. "The Hezbollah-Israel War: A Preliminary Assessment." *Middle East Brief* 10, no. 2 (2006).

the region, Hezbollah's act of aggression to Israel was perceived as absolutely intolerable.[280] However, Hezbollah, by deliberately stretching these rules clearly failed at incorporating Israel's rising appetite to first, changing the deterrence paradigm between both parties and second, to preserving its power reputation.[281] Indeed, Nasrallah, by the end of the 2006 war, confessed before the audience Hezbollah's gross miscalculation. On these lines, he stated the following:

> *"We did not have a 1 percent probability that the capturing operation would have led to a war on this scale... It would not have been possible for a reaction to a capturing operation to be on this scale."*[282]

Paradoxically, to Hezbollah's calculations, the abduction operation was set on a presumption of proportional or contained Israeli response, i.e. within the "rules of the game."[283] Therefore, this chapter proceeds by explaining the reasons behind Hezbollah's command, thus Nasrallah's miscalculations of the deterrence paradigm governing the volatile relationship between Hezbollah and Israel since, at least, the year 2000. In this vein, the following section poses a number of arguments to explain Hezbollah's calculus behind the abduction operation in terms of a mix pack of factors, the most important of which is Hezbollah's misperception of the deterrence posture of both parties.

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[280] Makovsky, David, and Jeffrey White. *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizballah war: A preliminary assessment*. Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006.
[281] Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to deter: deterrence failure and success in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, 2006–16." *International security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-196.
[282] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.
[283] Norton, Augustus Richard. "The role of Hezbollah in Lebanese domestic politics." *The International Spectator* 42, no. 4 (2007): 475-491.

6.2.2 Understating Hezbollah's Miscalculations on the Eve of the 2006 War: Misreading the Regional and International Incentives for Israel's Excitement

On many events, the weak attacks the strong first.[284] In fact, the weak attacks the strong for several reasons, of which is a high motivation resulting from a deeply entrenched commitment to particular values.[285] In this case, Nasrallah's "al wa'd al sadiq" became Hezbollah's main drive for its abduction operations. However, first, deterrence fails if the weaker actor misperceives the situation, and thus downplays the vulnerability of the stronger actor. Second, the vulnerability of the stronger actor and its appetite to defeat the weaker actor equally result in the demise of deterrence.[286] In this case, Hezbollah, and outside the pronounced realms of the "rules of the game" attacked Israel respectively.

Actually, when the weaker actor anticipates a marginal or no response by the stronger actor, such an attack only then, occurs. However, as the case of the July 12 abduction operation suggests, essentially linear calculations often fall in the trap of unanticipated responses, thus resulting in failed deterrence.[287] As explained next, a number of major considerations in Hezbollah's calculus have contributed to the demise of deterrence by 2006.

To begin with, Hezbollah's war-deterrence agenda by 2006 considered a mix pack of popular, military and international developments respectively. First, on the level of the aadversary's, i.e. Israel's, domestic populace, Nasrallah believed that the Israeli public, after the

[284] Wolf, Barry. *When the weak attack the strong: failures of deterrence*. RAND CORP SANTA MONICA CA, 1991.
[285] Wolf, 5.
[286] Wolf, 5.
[287] Wolf, 5.

Israeli withdrawal in 2000, has become highly vulnerable to human losses, whether soldiers or civilians. Therefore, according to Hezbollah's estimates, the Israeli public has been expected to withdraw consent from any large-scale military activity against Hezbollah.[288] According to these convictions, Hezbollah's command perceived the IDF as unwilling to engage in intense escalations that would usher public discontent as in the year 2000. Resultantly, on the level of the vulnerability of the Israeli public in particular, Hezbollah did not see fertile ground for a confrontation with Israel.

Second, on the military level, Hezbollah assumed that the abduction operation would survive, to a reasonable extent, based on the following two main considerations. Based on the first factor, Hezbollah sought that the "rules of the game", even if stretched, would provide Hezbollah with the perfect shield for its paramilitary activities, including abduction exercises, across the borderline, thus withdrawing Israel's pretexts for violations and war. Nevertheless, according to the second factor, Hezbollah was convinced that Israel's open front with the Palestinians since the outbreak of the second intifada, which started earlier in October 2000, would preoccupy the latter away from Hezbollah.[289] Thus, in between the "rules of the game" and Israel's open front with the Palestinians, Hezbollah carried its successful abduction operation.

Third, on the international and regional levels, Hezbollah has always seen in Israel but an American proxy in the region. Therefore, at minimum, Hezbollah's cadre was firmly convinced that any operation launched by Israel ought to be backed by its foremost ally, the US. Hence, and

[288] Bar, Shmuel. "Deterring nonstate terrorist groups: The case of Hizballah." *Comparative Strategy* 26, no. 5 (2007): 469-493.
[289] Bar, 485.

as by 2003, the latter was struggling in the muds of its invasion of Iraq, Hezbollah presumed that the US would be reluctant to grant Israel the green light for any large-scale retaliation against Hezbollah.[290] Again, and supposedly away from the US's suspicions, Hezbollah carried its abduction operation.

Most importantly, adding to Hezbollah's geopolitical evaluation presented above, Hezbollah's deterrence computation has proven to be focused, in big part, on Israel's retaliatory behavior upon and after withdrawal in 2000. To Hezbollah, Israel fully submitted to the "rules of the game" set by Hezbollah in 1996. For example, only few months after Israeli withdrawal, on October 7, 2000, Hezbollah successfully abducted three IDF soldiers patrolling in the Shebaa farms. In return, Israel but resumed its violation to Lebanese airspace and water sovereignty through various military activities, a routine which it had paused by June 2000.[291] Nevertheless, between 2000 and 2006, all of Hezbollah's quotidian military offenses against the IDF, including abduction attempts, were met by limited Israeli retaliations.

Therefore, as a result of Israel's "indirect" and relatively "loose" and "controlled" responses, Hezbollah was further convinced that first, its party's deterrence posture was properly functioning, and second, that Israel respected the 1996 "rules of the game" even more than Hezbollah itself did.[292] Resultantly, Hezbollah's increased self-confidence pushed it to engage in more daring raids against Israel throughout the years leading to 2006.[293]

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[290] Bar, 485.
[291] Norton, Augustus Richard. *Hezbollah: A Short History-Updated Edition*. Vol. 53. Princeton University Press, 2014.
[292] Bar, Shmuel. "Deterring nonstate terrorist groups: The case of Hizballah." *Comparative Strategy* 26, no. 5 (2007): 469-493.
[293] Rid, Thomas. "Deterrence beyond the state: The Israeli experience." *Contemporary Security Policy* 33, no. 1 (2012): 124-147.

Evidently, Israel's "deterrence signals" were unclear.[294] In fact, Israel's deterrence paradigm eroded between 2000 and 2006, especially that threats communicated or performed against Hezbollah, if any, were empty and mediocre.[295] Until 2004, Israel avoided augmenting its retaliations against Hezbollah in fear of opening a second front aside the Palestinian unrest which it was facing.[296] Resultantly, as Jervis coins, and due, in part, to overconfidence and no clear response by the adversary, Hezbollah assimilated new information to its existing beliefs.[297] Put differently, although Hezbollah was aware of the changing geostrategic calculus in the region, this information was "reinterpreted so that it does minimum damage to what the person already believes",[298] even when the "rules of the game" were considerably stretched. Hence, Hezbollah's decision makers preferred assimilating this new information to an already-set belief structure. Consequently, the July 12, 2006 abduction operation was carried.

In short, the deterrence relationship between Hezbollah and Israel was hindered by first, Hezbollah's violation of the "rules of the game", and second, by a turbulent and changing international and regional scene, thus raising Israel's appetite to changing the deterrence status quo. Within a landscape of macro geopolitical developments, the result of Hezbollah's operation was an all-out war. Next, the chapter begins by analyzing Nasrallah's speeches during the 34 days war from the point of view of deterrence. Put differently, the analysis of Nasrallah's bold employment of deterrence by punishment during the war days will help in understanding better

[294] Bar, Shmuel. "Deterring nonstate terrorist groups: The case of Hizballah." *Comparative Strategy* 26, no. 5 (2007): 469-493.
[295] Adamsky, Dmitry. "From Israel with deterrence: Strategic culture, intra-war coercion and brute force." *Security Studies* 26, no. 1 (2017): 157-184.
[296] Adamsky, 178.
[297] Jervis, Robert. "Deterrence and perception." *International security* 7, no. 3 (1982): 3-30.
[298] Jervis, 21.

how the latter has provided Israel with "powerful incentives"[299], through threats of rocket power predominantly, to change its behavior, i.e. ending the war. The chapter proceeds by interpreting Nasrallah's rhetorical strategy and how it converged with Hezbollah's military developments, along with Israel's magnitude of assaults, in light of a landscape of war and narrow deterrence.

6.2.3 Nasrallah's July 12 Speech: Avoiding the Eruption of a War with Israel through Immediate Deterrence

On the same day after the abduction operation on July 12, Nasrallah carried a press interview purposefully before an anticipated cabinet meeting among Israeli policymakers who were to convene and discuss future action vis a vis Hezbollah's assault.[300] Markedly, Nasrallah's timing of the press interview underpins the latter's eagerness to shape the perceptions of the Israelis, especially towards future action on the lines of deterrence and war. In fact, Nasrallah's speech served two main purposes. First, Nasrallah managed to reassure the Israelis that Hezbollah's intent is not an all-out war. Second, Nasrallah tried to deter preemptively any anticipated Israeli "out of the box", i.e. outside the "rules of the game" retaliation.

To begin with, Nasrallah bluntly expressed Hezbollah's reluctance to go to a full-scale war with Israel. Instead of bragging and heralding about the successful abduction operation, Nasrallah resorted to tranquilizing and normalizing the situation in the South. On these lines, Nasrallah posited the following:

[299] Freedman, Lawrence. *Deterrence*. Polity, 2004.
[300] شبكة الميادين." الجزء الأول - ما قبل الحرب :2006" الميادين قناة, July 30, 2016. https://www.almayadeen.net/episodes/723233/_2006-الحرب-قبل-ما.

"What we have aimed for at 9:05 in the morning was the capturing of Israeli soldiers for purposes of prisoners' exchange and peace. We do not want to escalate the situation in the South, this is not our intention. We do not want to take Lebanon to a war, nor do we want to take the region to a war."[301]

As the excerpt illustrates, Nasrallah is explicitly articulating the non-escalating nature and intentions of Hezbollah's operation. As he posited, the operation had not been carried for purposes of intense provocation. Surprisingly or not, Nasrallah was deflating the success of Hezbollah's operation, in an attempt to maintain the status quo in the South and in fear of unintended escalation. Unlike most of Nasrallah's speeches where he extensively resorted to ridiculing the IDF and Israel while triumphing Hezbollah's accomplishments,[302] Nasrallah is ironically and unprecedently deflating the success of his own party's abduction operation. If this were to indicate a fact, it shows that Nasrallah saw in the "rules of the game" the best alternative to war between both parties amid asymmetry in power and capabilities. Truly, and as Israel began planning for a full-scale retaliation, Nasrallah openly revealed his eagerness to preserving the "rules of the game". On these lines, he stated the following:

"We have always abided to calming down the situation across the borders… but the only exception has been abduction operations… So far, (the Israelis) have had a set of reactions (to the abduction operation), but we have, until now, exercised great restraint."[303]

[301] Nasrallah Hassan, Interview, July 12, 2006.
[302] Schleifer, Ron. "Psychological operations: A new variation on an age old art: Hezbollah versus Israel." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 1 (2006): 1-19.
[303] Nasrallah Hassan, Interview, July 12, 2006.

Indeed, in clear indication to Nasrallah's abidance to the "rules of the game" set in place, Hezbollah, at minimum, avoided escalating the situation. However, these attempts did not yield fruit especially that Israeli circles began preparing for a large-scale war.

Next, after Nasrallah's attempts at renormalizing the status quo, Nasrallah proceeded by deterring Israel on the lines of immediate deterrence by denial. In this vein, Nasrallah asserted to the Israelis that the only way to return the captured IDF soldiers is through negotiations. According to Nasrallah's excerpts illustrated below, any attempt, other than negotiations, like war, will be futile on these terms. Therefore, by confining Israeli success in returning the abducted soldiers to negotiations and bargaining, Nasrallah was further trying to deter war. Clearly, Nasrallah was eager to avoid a large-scale confrontation. Thus, to deter military activity, he stated the following:

"In all cases, not any military operation will result in the return of the kidnapped; this is settled… The only way, as I said, is through indirect negotiations, thus prisoners' exchange."[304]

"If the Israelis are considering any military action for the goal of restoring the two captives, then they are delusional, delusional and delusional, a fact which we repeat until we run out of breath. Israel and the entire world will not be able to return these two captives to their usurped homes."[305]

[304] Nasrallah Hassan, Interview, July 12, 2006.
[305] Nasrallah, Interview.

Clearly, to reestablish deterrence, Nasrallah is vehemently cutting the road on the success of any Israeli military operation launched for the purpose of recovering the kidnapped Israeli soldiers. Thus, and on these same lines, Nasrallah proceeds, in his press interview, by deterring Israel by denial several times. In the following, a number of excerpts are illustrated to highlight Nasrallah's immediate deterrence attempts by denial, on the eve of a war which has become more likely to erupt than ever before. On the lines of denial, Nasrallah stated the following:

"The Israelis in power today are new…I advise them, before they convene at 8:00pm, to ask previous leaders and ministers about their experience in Lebanon…"[306]

"To the Chief of Staff, who threatens to return Lebanon as it was 20 years ago, I say, Lebanon today is not the same Lebanon it was 20 years ago."[307]

"*I am in no need of making threats… you all know Hezbollah and its credibility."*[308]

Evidently, Nasrallah did not overtly nor straightforwardly communicate to Israel the costs it would incur if a war erupts between both parties. Knowing that Israel and Hezbollah have never fought an all-out war, except for the considerably large-scale confrontations of 1993 and 1996, Nasrallah, as deterrence dictates, should have converged between two elements: explicit military capability and the message of deterrence.[309] Indeed, a harmonized synchronization between both

[306] Nasrallah, Interview.
[307] Nasrallah, Interview.
[308] Nasrallah, Interview.
[309] Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to deter: deterrence failure and success in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, 2006–16." *International security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-196.

elements would have ameliorated Hezbollah's deterrence posture vis a vis Israel in a much more proactive rather than poetic manner. Yet, Nasrallah's refusal to communicate elaborate and targeted threats on the eve of a potential war, Nasrallah further demeaned the deterrence posture of Hezbollah vis a vis Israel. At maximum, Nasrallah promised Israel with surprises if, and only if it decided to go to war. Also, he broadcasted Hezbollah as more capable and powerful. Thus, on the lines of "vague" punishment, he stated the following:

"The resistance is different, its potentials are different, its morals are different, its will is different…"[310]

"If they (Israelis) choose confrontation, they shall expect surprises…"[311]

Indeed, in this press interview, Nasrallah followed the same discoursal pattern of covertness as in the years between 2000 and 2005, at least in what concerns an expression of minimum required military capability to foster deterrence. Thus, the balance which reestablishing deterrence demands, between discourse, credibility and capability was not achieved at any level.[312] Put differently, the covertness in military capability, which accompanied Nasrallah's threats between 2000 and July 12, 2006, made of his threats less credible and punitive and more "vague" in military terms. Thus, while effective and credible deterrence requires a minimum expression of capability,[313] Nasrallah, since 2000, and as explained in the previous chapter,

[310] Nasrallah Hassan, Interview, July 12, 2006.
[311] Nasrallah, Interview.
[312] Harvey, John. *Conventional deterrence and national security*. Air Power Studies Centre, Royal Australian Air Force, 1997.
[313] Dougherty, James E., and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff. *Contending theories of international relations*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1971.

failed at accomplishing this basic task. By merely denying Israel's estimates of Hezbollah's rocket power as in May 2005, and by promising surprises on the eve of a war as on July 2006, Nasrallah did not threaten Israel to a deterrable extent. Truly, and instead of merely talking about exciting surprises of unknown nature, Nasrallah should have communicated minimum required military capability to deter.[314] However, Nasrallah, who himself refused to communicate threats on the eve of the war, abided to absolute secrecy in what concerns the translation of military capability to a discourse, and thus deterrence.

In short, throughout the July 12 speech, Nasrallah has plausibly expressed his bias to negotiations rather than war. Really, Nasrallah was trying to force negotiations upon Israel.[315] However, he failed. Also, Nasrallah failed at communicating credible and militarily translatable threats to Israel. Thereby, to the demise of deterrence and Nasrallah, the latter's miscalculations transformed the relationship between Hezbollah and Israel to one of absolute war. Next, by the start of the war, the chapter proceeds by elaborating Nasrallah's narrow deterrence attempts.

6.3 Phase One of The War: Nasrallah Reproducing his 1992-1996 Rocket-Discursive Deterrence Equation

6.3.1 Israel's Air Campaigns Vs. Nasrallah's Rocket and Discursive War of Deterrence by Punishment

By the failure of Nasrallah's forced negotiations efforts in his July 12 interview, the government of Israel took the decision to abort all truce efforts and engage in a large-scale

[314] Dougherty & Robert, 374.
[315] Lambeth, Benjamin S. *Air operations in Israel's war Against Hezbollah: Learning from Lebanon and getting it right in Gaza*. Rand Corporation, 2011.

confrontation against Hezbollah, thus totally aborting the "rules of the game" for the first time in 10 years since 1996. Indeed, by July 12 midnight, Israeli fighter jets began their air campaign against Hezbollah's military and strategic assets, including long-range rocket launchers, command stations and Hezbollah's most influential mouthpiece, Al-Manar TV station.[316]

Undeniably, Israel's response was far beyond what the traditional "rules of the game" have dictated. With an incenting international mood, Israel's reputation failed at absorbing Hezbollah's formidable success in the abduction operation. Thus, Israel finally decided to engage itself in a large-scale assault, beyond what Hezbollah's cadre anticipated at any point.[317] Really, it was the start of an all-out war, especially that Israel slowly began to widen its attack beyond the South and Hezbollah per se. So, how will Hezbollah and Nasrallah respond to Israel's retaliation?

Actually, through a series of speeches and interviews, Nasrallah created a deterrence narrative which he utilized to foster a balanced equation between on-ground military activity and rhetorical deterrence. In fact, Hezbollah responded to Israel's retaliation on two levels. On the first level, and as any war requires, Hezbollah engaged in a military confrontation against Israel. However, most importantly, on the second level, Nasrallah was answering Israel's assaults through speeches.[318] Indeed, the latter's speeches became the nucleus of Hezbollah's psychological deterrence campaign against Israel throughout the war. Along the course of the 34

[316] Matthews, Matt M. *We were caught unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli war*. DIANE Publishing, 2011.
[317] Norton, Augustus Richard. *Hezbollah: A Short History-Updated Edition*. Vol. 53. Princeton University Press, 2014.
[318] Worth, Robert F. "Hezbollah Answers Israel With Speeches." The New York Times, January 5, 2009. https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/05/world/middleeast/05hezbollah.html.

days war, and including the July 12 speech, Nasrallah carried a total of seven speeches[319], before finally holding a ceremonial victory speech by the end of the war. Next, the chapter proceeds by analyzing Nasrallah's deterrence discursive attempts with respect to the unfolding military and political developments throughout the war days.

6.3.2 Nasrallah's July 14 Speech: Deterring Israel by Punishment and Through "Surprises"

By July 14, both Hezbollah and Israel completely aborted the "rules of the game" and began augmenting their respective counterattacks in what became an all-out war. On July 13, Israel began its "civilian infrastructure attacks" over Lebanon and beyond Hezbollah's military infrastructure per se.[320] On these lines, that same day, Israeli aircrafts began bombing several runways at the Beirut Rafiq Hariri International Airport, thus totally paralyzing the activity of commercial flights into and outside Lebanon. Also, Israeli aircrafts and gunships, to tighten the grip on the Lebanese government and Hezbollah likewise, imposed a total sea and air blockade over Lebanon.[321] Indeed, through Israel's heightened retaliation, the latter's offensive actions escalated far beyond what concerned targeting Hezbollah in itself to include the entire country of Lebanon. Resultantly, after Israel's imposition of the blockade and its bombardment of the airport, Nasrallah, on July 14, delivered to the press his first taped message after the July 12 interview. On these lines, and in condemnation to Israel's boldened attacks, Nasrallah threatened the latter on a high note by positing the following:

[319] Hopkins, Rebecca Ann Gutow. "The role of rhetoric in legitimizing authority: the speeches of Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah during the 2006 War." PhD diss., 2012.
[320] Arkin, William M. *Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War*. Lulu. com, 2011.
[321] Arkin, 168.

"You wanted an open war, and we are heading for an open war. We are ready for it. It will be a war on all levels, to Haifa, and believe me, beyond Haifa, and beyond, beyond Haifa…"[322]

"There is no difference between the Southern Suburbs and Beirut, or any house in the South of Lebanon, or the Beqaa, or the North, or Mount Lebanon or any corner of Lebanon…I won't say today if you hit Beirut, we will hit Haifa… I won't say if you hit the Beirut Southern Suburbs, we will hit Haifa… This equation, which you wanted to end, will end."[323]

Between first, Nasrallah's "open war", as in the first excerpt, and the exclusively mutual "rules of the game", i.e. the equation of deterrence which confined attacks to limited retaliations between both parties and which Nasrallah sought to end, as per the second excerpt, is one essential distinction. While the "rules of the game" confined reciprocal attacks and retaliations to restricted areas like the security zone and later, the Shebaa farms,[324] Nasrallah's "open war" gave Hezbollah the privilege to heighten the stakes, psychologically and militarily likewise, past concise or agreed-upon territories, thus civilians, and beyond Northern Israel, into Haifa, and always for the greater purpose of deterring Israel. For instance, between July 13 and 14 only, Hezbollah, through the "open war" doctrine, fired a total of 228 rockets into Northern Israel, thus an average of 100 rockets per day; a number of rockets which Hezbollah launched on approximately a daily basis over 34 days.[325]

[322] Nasrallah, Speech, July 14, 2006
[323] Nasrallah, Speech.
[324] Sobelman, Daniel. *New Rules of the Game: Israel and Hizbollah after the Withdrawal from Lebanon*. Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 2004.
[325] Arkin, William M. *Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War*. Lulu. com, 2011.

Truly, Hezbollah's employment of a large batch of missiles, especially Katyushas, resembled much the latter's 1992-1993 psychological campaign for the purpose of which these rockets have been deployed. Put differently, the main purpose of sustaining rocket attacks against Israeli civilians and settlements was to target the latter through what it has been most sensitive to, civilian life.[326]

In fact, on July 16, Hezbollah first struck the city of Haifa through an Iranian customized long-range Fajr Rocket.[327] In total, 8 civilians were killed and 77 others were wounded.[328] The significance of this long-range strike stretches beyond Hezbollah's narrow military gains to include intense psychological harm to Israel, the populace of which is at its heart. Interestingly, over the very first days of the war, Nasrallah began achieving "symbolic gains" through which he sharpened Hezbollah's image and dented Israel's deterrence posture.[329] Truly, the "psychological effect" of Hezbollah's rockets, and the vulnerability of the Israeli population to such attacks, have made of Hezbollah's rocket policy, over the course of the war, a precious gain to Hezbollah. By July 26, at least 15% of Israel's population, even in major cities, has been forced to seek underground shelter due in great part to Hezbollah's continuous missile launching over the course of the war days.[330]

[326] DeVore, Marc R., Armin B. Stähli, and Ulrike Esther Franke. "Dynamics of insurgent innovation: How Hezbollah and other non-state actors develop new capabilities." *Comparative Strategy* 38, no. 4 (2019): 371-400.
[327] Arkin, William M. *Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War*. Lulu. com, 2011.
[328] "The Second Lebanon War: A Timeline." Idf.il. July 7, 2016. https://www.idf.il/en/articles/hezbollah/the-second-lebanon-war-a-timeline/.
[329] Gabrielsen, Iver. "Military Strategy and the Conduct of the 2006 Israel–Hezbollah War." *Comparative Strategy* 32, no. 5 (2013): 435-442.
[330] Arkin, William M. *Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War*. Lulu. com, 2011.

Through the augmented replenishing of his 1992 and 1993 deterrence by punishment formula, Nasrallah, on the lines of the "open war" strategy, gave himself the uttermost right to strike anywhere and anytime inside Israel. For instance, while in 1993, Hezbollah's Katyusha rockets reached short of Northern Israel, by 2006 Hezbollah demonstrated a considerable ability to strike not only deeper into mid-Israel, i.e. into Haifa and beyond, but offshore as well.

In this vein, Nasrallah proceeded his July 14 taped message by fulfilling his promises for surprises. Nasrallah invited his audience and the Israelis to watch Israel's warship sink before the Lebanese coast. In a very theatrical and dramatic fashion, Nasrallah created a bold ambiance for his threats as he closely synchronized the timing of his words with the targeting of the INS naval vessel during his speech.[331] Actually, within few seconds after Nasrallah's declaration, the Israeli battleship had been hit. On these lines, Nasrallah declared the following:

"The surprises which I have promised you will begin from now. Now, in the middle of the sea, before Beirut, the Israeli battleship… look at it burn and sink…"[332]

Markedly, in response to Israel's exceptional blockade and bombardments, including the airport and several other major liaisons like roads and bridges, Hezbollah was ready to counter surprise the IDF beyond its traditional Katyusha capability. Through an Iranian C-802 Nour guided missile, Hezbollah struck Israel's INS Hanit naval vessel, thus disabling it and killing a

[331] Lambeth, Benjamin S. *Air operations in Israel's war Against Hezbollah: Learning from Lebanon and getting it right in Gaza*. Rand Corporation, 2011.
[332] Nasrallah, Speech, July 14, 2006

total of 4 of its crewmembers.[333] Truly, according to senior IDF naval officers, Hezbollah's attack had caught them in absolute surprise, especially that they believed that Hezbollah did not possess surface-to-sea guided rockets, and had thus kept the anti-missile radars on the vessel turned off.[334] Consequently, Nasrallah was able to fulfill his promise for surprises with considerable success.

Indeed, the element of surprise, combined to threats by punishment, has become a dangerous precedent in Nasrallah's discourse, and further revolutionized Nasrallah's words and deeds likewise. Put differently, the surprises which Nasrallah has promised, and which have been best vested in the targeting of the INS Hanit naval vessel, further complicated, to the Israelis, the ability to understand the equation of deterrence which Nasrallah was trying to impose on them. However, at minimum, through this essentially magnetized attack, Nasrallah began to forge the new equation of deterrence by punishment and beyond what the traditional "rules of the game" have long dictated.

6.3.3 Nasrallah's July 25 and 29 Speeches: Bolstering the Equation of Deterrence by Punishment Through Haifa and Beyond

After around two weeks from the start of the war, Nasrallah, through surprising and unprecedented attacks, as illustrated above, began to execute his heightened threats, through rockets, and beyond the restricted boundaries of Northern Israel. Meanwhile, Israel was as well exponentially widening its attacks against Lebanon. Actually, Israel, and adding to its attacks on

[333] Norton, Augustus Richard. *Hezbollah: A Short History-Updated Edition*. Vol. 53. Princeton University Press, 2014.
[334] "Intel. Flaw to Blame in INS Hanit Attack." The Jerusalem Post | JPost.com. January 01, 0001. https://www.jpost.com/israel/intel-flaw-to-blame-in-ins-hanit-attack.

intelligence and military bases for Hezbollah had, since the start of the war, continuously and intensively bombarded the Dahiya of Beirut and several pivotal infrastructures in Lebanon, like roads, bridges and electricity powerplants, thus inflicting exhaustive damages to civilian houses and buildings.[335] Thus, by then, Nasrallah's deterrence by "rocket punishment" was set to deter Israel's boundless attacks against not only Hezbollah per se, but the people of Lebanon as a whole likewise.[336] Therefore, building on these developments, on July 25, Nasrallah appeared on Al Manar TV station and explained Hezbollah's deterrence rationale which was vested in the striking of major Israeli cities. In this vein, he posited the following:

"When the Zionists behave on the premise of no regulations, and no red lines, and no limits to the confrontation, it is then our right to behave similarly in response."[337]

"The same way we surprised you by the sea and by Haifa, we will surprise you beyond Haifa…"[338]

Evidently, Nasrallah is overtly proceeding in his punitive and escalating threats vis a vis Israel in the hope of successfully deterring its attacks. In reality, any actor's threats, i.e. Nasrallah's in this case, would only succeed if they were first trusted, and second, interpreted correctly by the adverse actor.[339] As Nasrallah was able to hit two considerable targets, Haifa and the INS naval vessel, thus establishing the credibility of his threats by punishment, the latter was

[335] Kober, Avi. "The Israel defense forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the poor performance?." *Journal of strategic studies* 31, no. 1 (2008): 3-40.
[336] Arkin, William M. *Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War*. Lulu. com, 2011.
[337] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, July 25, 2006
[338] Nasrallah, Speech.
[339] Lewis, James A. "Cross-domain deterrence and credible threats." *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (2010): 1-5.

further trying to strengthen the deterrence posture of Hezbollah by proceeding in his promises and surprises. Now, Nasrallah was to establish the credibility of his threats beyond Haifa. Resultantly, Nasrallah was to initiate the second phase of his rocket policy, i.e. striking beyond Haifa. On these deterrent lines, Nasrallah, on July 29, posited the following:

> *"I would like to announce, after all this time, and after Israel has gone too far in its assaults… that we will now enter into the phase beyond Haifa.*[340]

Clearly, Nasrallah, by augmenting the punitive nature of his threats, i.e. beyond Haifa, was trying to establish minimum relative proportionality in strikes between both parties, thus deterrence. Exclusively through rocket power, Nasrallah sought to reinstate deterrence. On these lines, by July 28, and using long-range Khaibar-1 missiles, Hezbollah fired several strikes into the city of Afula, a town located to the south of Haifa.[341] Also, on August 2, Hezbollah launched its second deepest strike inside Israel where its modified "Fajr" rocket hit near Beit She'an, a city located beyond Haifa and Afula.[342] Likewise, on August 4, two Hezbollah rockets hit near the city of Hadera, the deepest Israeli city which a Hezbollah rocket had reached.[343] Resultantly, through these impaired strikes, Nasrallah was able to fulfill the deterrence equation beyond Haifa.

[340] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, July 29, 2006.
[341] Harel, Amos, and Avi Issacharoff. *34 days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the war in Lebanon*. St. Martin's Press, 2008.
[342] Arkin, William M. *Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War*. Lulu. com, 2011.
[343] Arkin, 222.

Yet, most importantly, Nasrallah, since the earliest days of the war, had repeatedly stressed that Hezbollah's assaults are strictly defensive and essentially deterrent in nature. In this fashion, on July 25 and 29, Nasrallah affirmed the following respectively:

> *"These weapons (Hezbollah's) are not weapons of revenge, but weapons of deterrence."*[344]

> *"We are now in a new phase of the confrontations, a confrontation imposed on us by the enemy…"*[345]

Indeed, Nasrallah reiterated the essentially deterrent nature of Hezbollah's attacks. In this vein, Nasrallah posited that the party's assaults are strictly conditioned by Israel's nature of attacks. Thus, the further Israel escalates, the further Hezbollah retaliates and vice versa. Unless Israel constricts its attacks, Nasrallah constantly affirmed that Hezbollah is ready for escalation, and always through the deterrence equation of rockets.

6.4 Phase Two of The War: Nasrallah's Discourse of Deterrence by Denial vis a vis Israeli Ground Operations and his Final Reminder of Punishment

6.4.1 Israel's Ground Campaigns Vs. Nasrallah's Discursive War of Denial and Intimidation

The ground campaign, like the air campaign, was fiercely confronted by Hezbollah fighters who transformed the confrontations from a classic military intervention to a war of bloody

[344] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, July 25, 2006.
[345] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, July 29, 2006.

attrition. Verily, only after few days into the war, Israel realized that its extensive air campaigns did little to halt Hezbollah's ability to fire rockets into Israel. Markedly, not only were Hezbollah's rockets able to reach Haifa and beyond, the latter was nevertheless able to launch Katyusha rockets into Northern Israel with an average of 100 rockets per day and on a daily basis until the end of the war.[346]

Actually, Israel's over reliance on airpower represented a strategic failure to the latter,[347] especially that Hezbollah's bunkers and rocket launching sites were well camouflaged within a mountainous landscape, thus hard to site and track. Therefore, despite the IDF's reluctance in deploying ground troops into Lebanon at first, Israel performed, on July 17, its first limited ground invasion in an attempt to achieve what airpower couldn't attain: demolishing well-entrenched bunkers, blocking supply routes and destroying missile launching sites, thus absolutely demobilizing Hezbollah's military command.[348] However, as explained next, success in the ground campaigns has proven to be an arduous task to achieve.

Before delving deeper into understanding the dynamics between Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence and the ground campaigns, important is to underpin the following main point. The glue for Nasrallah's overall rhetoric of deterrence, throughout the war speeches, has been intimidation and denial. Throughout most, if not all of the speeches conducted during the war days, Nasrallah's favorite resort to ridicule Israel's efforts and gains within the psychological

[346] Gabrielsen, Iver. "Military Strategy and the Conduct of the 2006 Israel–Hezbollah War." *Comparative Strategy* 32, no. 5 (2013): 435-442.
[347] Inbar, Efraim. "How Israel bungled the second Lebanon war." *Middle East Quarterly* (2007).
[348] Norton, Augustus Richard. *Hezbollah: A Short History-Updated Edition*. Vol. 53. Princeton University Press, 2014.

war of deterrence has been denial. However, although deterrence by denial did exist on most events, a notable distinction can be drawn between the events upon which Nasrallah employed extensive punishment and denial respectively.

As evidence suggests, to foster the rocket-deterrence equation, Nasrallah abided to deterrence by punishment predominantly. However, when Israel began its first ground operations in Southern Lebanon by July 17,[349] Nasrallah, to deter the latter, resorted extensively to deterrence by denial rather than punishment. Thereby, as explained next, the intertwinement between denial and the psychological warfare launched by Nasrallah's discourse enabled Hezbollah, in reasonable part, to score well in the psychological warfare against Israel, thus upsetting the most sophisticated military troops in the region.[350]

6.4.2 Nasrallah's August 9 and 12 Speeches: Denying Israel's Wins in South Lebanon

Israel's first large-scale ground operation into the southern villages of Lebanon on July 17 gradually began to intensify along the war days, especially around the villages of Maroun Al Ras, Bint Jbeil, Ayta Ashaab, the Litani river and other adjacent areas.[351] Actually, over the weeks, the battles which took place in all southern villages were vicious for the civilian population residing in the South on one hand, and for the IDF in the field on the other. First, the IDF little discriminated between civilian targets and military targets in Southern Lebanon on most events. Truly, the IDF, whose policy consisted of issuing warnings to citizens in the South to evacuate their homes, thus saw in any visible movement, house or vehicle, a legitimate

[349] Matthews, Matt M. *We were caught unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli war*. DIANE Publishing, 2011.
[350] Schleifer, Ron. "Psychological operations: A new variation on an age old art: Hezbollah versus Israel." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 1 (2006): 1-19.
[351] Matthews, Matt M. *We were caught unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli war*. DIANE Publishing, 2011.

target.[352] Therefore, many of the Southerners who remained in the South, notwithstanding thousands who have fled their villages, fell victim of Israeli attacks and airstrikes.

Nevertheless, amid civilian chaos and causalities, Hezbollah fighters displayed high levels of resistance and tenacity vis a vis Israeli soldiers. For instance, Hezbollah's guerilla fighting tactics focused primarily on slowing down and demobilizing the conventional missions of the IDF over a long period of time. Markedly, Hezbollah's fighters exhibited high levels of determination and skills. Nevertheless, adding to Hezbollah's proficiency and know-how of every inch of ground in the South, the IDF's inability to employ tanks and maneuver through heavy machineries, due in part to the mountainous landscape and the narrow village streets, left the IDF to fight with infantry before Hezbollah's devoted men. Resultantly, Hezbollah, the weaker actor in this asymmetric warfare, was able to impose its rules on Israel, the stronger actor itself.[353] Indeed, Hezbollah's strategy, in asymmetrical conflicts, has provided the latter with an uttermost advantage over organized conventional ground campaigns as carried by the IDF. "When strong actors attack with a direct strategy and weak actors defend using an indirect strategy… weak actors should win."[354] Resultantly, the IDF suffered several losses and deaths in what turned out to be the biggest surprise of the war.

In parallel to the Israel's air operations and Hezbollah's rocket strikes, Nasrallah, by August 9 and 12, addressed the ground confrontations with amplified messages of deterrence by denial.

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[352] Bouckaert, Peter. *Why they died: Civilian casualties in Lebanon during the 2006 war*. Vol. 19. Human Rights Watch, 2007.
[353] Exum, Andrew. *Hizballah at war: A military assessment*. Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006.
[354] Arreguin-Toft, Ivan. "How the weak win wars: A theory of asymmetric conflict." *International security* 26, no. 1 (2001): 93-128.

However, notwithstanding that Nasrallah did hint to these confrontations in previous speeches, evidence suggests that only when Hezbollah hit Haifa and beyond, i.e. by July 28, that Nasrallah focused greatly and explicitly on ground campaigns which, in turn, have widened and boldened over the days. In fact, Hezbollah prepared the battlefield for ground confrontations on two levels. On the first level, Hezbollah fought fiercely and skillfully for every inch of ground.[355] Second, and most importantly, Nasrallah endorsed these confrontations with a rhetoric of harassment and intimidation, thus further demoralizing the IDF soldiers in the field. Hence, along these two levels, Nasrallah developed a psychological and military war of equal deterrence efficacy. In this fashion, on August 9 and 12, Nasrallah delivered two consecutive speeches fulfilled with an extensive saturation of expressions of denial towards Israeli accomplishments in the South. Nasrallah, on August 9, first posited the following:

"The most important brigade in its ground forces (Israel) is the Golani brigade which suffered a huge defeat, to the extent that one of its most important officers said that this unit… was one of the most elitist units in the Golani brigade… It was completely destroyed and suffered from killings, injuries, and psychologically disabled soldiers…"[356]

"You can even watch some images where soldiers are being transported while sleeping on their stomachs because they are shot in their backs.[357]

"This elitist unit fled like mice from the battlefield."[358]

[355] Exum, Andrew. *Hizballah at war: A military assessment*. Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006.
[356] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, August 9, 2006.
[357] Nasrallah, Speech.
[358] Nasrallah, Speech.

Very similarly, only few days after his August 9 speech, Nasrallah reappeared on screen on August 12 to address the Israelis on the exact same lines of harassment and intimidation. Nasrallah proceeded by dispiriting IDF soldiers in the field and the Israeli decision makers likewise. In this vein, Nasrallah deterred by denial through the following few statements:

"Although the days have passed, we find that confrontations are still in the frontlines, in the villages upfront and the positions upfront."[359]

"They say that they established control over a position for Hezbollah after harsh confrontations, but I don't know which confrontations they are talking about. Are they fighting one another?"[360]

"After 23 days from the confrontations and violent shelling, along the deployment of different brigades and reserve units, they claim entering a certain village. What is this great achievement?"[361]

"We know that the Israeli tanks and machineries sweep hundreds of kilometers of a certain area within hours. Yet, they (tanks and machineries) can only enter few hundred meters within days in the South of Lebanon."[362]

Really, Nasrallah rhetorically excelled in the discursive campaign of infiltration and denial. Nasrallah's speeches were at the heart of the latter's propaganda efforts of denial.[363] Thus, to

[359] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, August 12, 2006.
[360] Nasrallah, Speech.
[361] Nasrallah, Speech.
[362] Nasrallah, Speech.
[363] Brennen, Lisa M. *Hezbollah: psychological warfare against Israel*. NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL MONTEREY CA, 2009.

harass and demoralize the Israeli audience, including the general public, officials and soldiers, Nasrallah resorted to emotionally compelling statements through which he unconventionally denied gains or achievements for Israel's ground campaigns in Southern Lebanon. Actually, Hezbollah was capable of destroying several Israeli state-of-the art Merkava tanks,[364] of which 11 out of 24 had been completely destroyed in the battle of Wadi Saluki on August 11, as part of the IDF's drive to the Litany river.[365] Also, with Hezbollah's ability to halt the IDF's control over the villages, Nasrallah further gained the privilege to magnetize his words of denial.

Through these statements, Nasrallah was trying to establish symbolic gains for Hezbollah. By picturing the Israelis as confused and uncapable, Hezbollah further demeaned the efforts of the IDF while revamped Hezbollah's audacity, power and trustworthiness. Indeed, Nasrallah's discursive strategy, which had been saturated with expressions of denial, was not only concentrated on issuing plane threats but was as well sought to promote Hezbollah's heroic and undefeatable image against Israel's losses.[366] Through this strategy, Nasrallah believed that symbolic victories would badly tarnish Israel's deterrence posture.[367] At minimum, through the targeting of the INS Hanit naval vessel, and by destroying Israel's state of the art Merkava tanks, notwithstanding the sustained rocket attacks, Nasrallah sought to destroy the IDF's image of invincibility.[368]

[364] Gabrielsen, Iver. "Military Strategy and the Conduct of the 2006 Israel–Hezbollah War." *Comparative Strategy* 32, no. 5 (2013): 435-442.
[365] Jones, Clive, and Sergio Catignani, eds. *Israel and Hizbollah: An asymmetric conflict in historical and comparative perspective*. Routledge, 2009.
[366] Schleifer, Ron. "Psychological operations: A new variation on an age old art: Hezbollah versus Israel." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 1 (2006): 1-19.
[367] Gabrielsen, Iver. "Military Strategy and the Conduct of the 2006 Israel–Hezbollah War." *Comparative Strategy* 32, no. 5 (2013): 435-442.
[368] Gabrielsen, 439.

6.4.3 Nasrallah's August 12 Speech Part Two: A final Reminder for Deterrence by Punishment

In the same August 12 speech, Nasrallah fused deterrence by punishment with denial. On this date, Nasrallah communicated his final message of deterrence by punishment which, out of all, was one of the most resonating and far reaching during the war days. Actually, Nasrallah's deterrence message came after claims that the IDF ought to strike deeper inside Lebanon, i.e. into Beirut. Therefore, in reply to the IDF's threats to hit Beirut, Nasrallah announced Hezbollah's long-range rocket targets for the first time in his "beyond and beyond Haifa" promise. Through this message, Nasrallah sought to further heighten the stakes in an additional attempt to deter Israel's air strikes more effectively. On these lines, Nasrallah threatened the following:

"If you hit our capital, we will hit the capital of your usurping entity. If you hit Beirut, the Islamic Resistance will hit the city of Tel Aviv, and it is capable of doing so with god's help."[369]

So, how successful was Nasrallah's final deterrence by punishment equation? Markedly, Hezbollah did not hit Tel Aviv for two reasons. First, many of Hezbollah's long-range missiles had been totally destroyed during the very first days of the war, thus paralyzing its ability to strike deeper into Southern Israel.[370] Second, Israel did not hit the capital of Beirut per se until the end of the war, except for its outskirts. Resultantly, nor Beirut or Tel Aviv were respectively hit by both parties.

[369] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, August 12, 2006.
[370] Kalb, Marvin, and Carol Saivetz. "The Israeli—Hezbollah war of 2006: The media as a weapon in asymmetrical conflict." *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 12, no. 3 (2007): 43-66.

Yet, even more important than Hezbollah's deterrent counterstrikes, Nasrallah, for the first time since July 12, explicitly articulated a deterrence deal for Israel.[371] In this vein, Nasrallah advanced the following:

> *"We would like to affirm that our strikes on the settlements… are a reaction and not an action. When you attack our cities… we react in return, and at any time you decide to stop your campaigns against our cities… we will not hit with our rockets any Israeli city or settlement…"*[372]

Nasrallah's last call offered Hezbollah, like Israel, the chance to reestablish deterrence in what concerns, mainly, civilians and nonmilitary strikes. In fact, Nasrallah's old-new deal resembles much the terms of the 1996 "rules of the game" agreement which confined attacks to non-civilians, outside cities and settlements, and solely to the military groups in combat.[373] If this were to indicate a fact, Nasrallah's deal confirms that Hezbollah's rocket policy persisted for the same purposes since 1996. However, augmented capability has allowed Hezbollah to strike deeper and further into Israel, and thus deter though heightened stakes. Yet, in essence, Hezbollah's rocket policy, since 1996 at least, and until the 2006 war, and by stressing its reactive rather than active nature, has fed one important purpose: deterring Israeli attacks on civilians.

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[371] Arkin, William M. *Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War*. Lulu. com, 2011.
[372] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, August 12, 2006.
[373] Nasrallah, Hassan, Nicholas N. Noe, Nicholas Blanford, and Ellen Khouri. *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. London: Verso, 2007.

Yet, Nasrallah's call, which came only two days before the ceasefire agreement comes into effect, fell on deaf ears in Tel Aviv. Ironically, on August 13, only few hours before the ceasefire came into effect the following day, Israel carried one of its most intense airstrikes on Southern Beirut, with at least twenty "huge explosions" being reported, along around 178 attacks carried overnight.[374] Markedly, Israel was sending some of its last messages of hurting power to Hezbollah.

6.5 The End of the 34 Days War: Hezbollah Translating Military Gains into Politics

6.5.1 Resolution 1701 and the End of Hostilities: Israel and Hezbollah Back to the Barracks

Meanwhile, as hostilities progressed, several ceasefire plans have been drafted by the Lebanese government, the US and France.[375] Finally, on August 11, resolution 1701, which first and foremost called for ending hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel, was unanimously adopted by the UNSC.[376] By August 14, while resolution 1701 came into effect, hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel halted progressively. In fact, the resolution called first, for the complete withdrawal of the Israeli army from Southern Lebanon. Second, it called for the deployment of the LAF along the Southern Lebanese borders. Third, it dictated a reinforcement of the UNIFIL troops demarcating both Lebanese and Israeli borders.[377]

[374] Arkin, William M. *Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War*. Lulu. com, 2011.
[375] Dionigi, Filippo. *Hezbollah, Islamist politics, and international society*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
[376] Salamey, Imad. *The government and politics of Lebanon*. Routledge, 2013.
[377] Cordesman, Anthony H., William D. Sullivan, and George Sullivan. *Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war*. Vol. 29, no. 4. CSIS, 2007.

In reality, neither Hezbollah nor Israel were totally victorious or defeated as per the terms of resolution 1701. Instead, the resolution interestingly offered both parties adequate incentives to reestablish deterrence, especially that Hezbollah sustained the war. Paradoxically, through resolution 1701, both parties have granted one another the opportunity to recalculate the costs and benefits of a future large-scale confrontations and most importantly, to calculate the benefits of a reciprocally acknowledged deterrence formula.

As explained next, upon the conclusion of resolution 1701, Nasrallah's August 14 speech, by the end of the war, served the purpose of deflating Israeli wins, of all kinds, and inflating Hezbollah's gains. By August 14, hostilities between both parties ended and Nasrallah delivered his final messages of denial during the 34 days war.

6.5.2 Nasrallah's August 14 Speech: Winning Politics Through Denial

In parallel to the ratification of resolution 1701, Nasrallah, on August 14, delivered his final speech before his victory speech one month later. Nasrallah, through his final war day words, overtly denied all of Israel's military achievements against Hezbollah on two main levels. On the first level, Nasrallah denied Israel's ability to deplete Hezbollah's rocket arsenal, thus launching sites and the ability to strike deep into Israel and most importantly, beyond Haifa. Interestingly, one day earlier, on August 13, and in clear indication of resilience, Hezbollah fired 220 rockets into Israel, a number which denotes the second highest average of daily rockets launched per day by the party.[378] Israel, for its part, and illustrated earlier, had carried, on that same day, some of

[378] Arkin, William M. *Divining Victory: Airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War*. Lulu. com, 2011.

its most intensive airstrikes during the war. At minimum, both parties were sending their final messages of resilience.

Second, on the same lines of denial, Nasrallah further denied any Israeli gains in the ground confrontations along the Southern Lebanese borders, thus demonstrating Hezbollah's solid control of all border towns and villages. In this vein, Nasrallah, through a "sum up of Hezbollah wins" and a "sum up of denies to Israeli wins" stated the following:

"Until now… more than 60 Merkava tanks have been destroyed, along tens of military bulldozers and tens of troop carriers… More than 100 officers and soldiers have been killed in the confrontations until now, and more than 400 have been injured…"[379]

"Until this moment, the enemy failed to halt Hezbollah's rocket power, thus obligating civilians (in Northern Israel) to remain in shelters or to be displaced, along economic, material, monetary and humane immense damages which the enemy is still hiding."[380]

"Until now, the Israelis have not been able to take control over the borderline which they said they wanted to come back to…"[381]

With the cessation of hostilities upon the approval of resolution 1701 by Israel, Lebanon and Hezbollah, Nasrallah's speech was to serve the purpose of reconciling between military gains

[379] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, August 14, 2006.
[380] Nasrallah, Speech.
[381] Nasrallah, Speech.

and political ratifications. With that said, Nasrallah slowly began to openly claim wins for Hezbollah, through denial, at a time where the material, financial and human costs of war have become incredibly high on the party of Hezbollah and Lebanon likewise as illustrated below. In fact, by denying all Israeli wins, and trumping Hezbollah's military achievements, Nasrallah sought to invest in resolution 1701 as part of Hezbollah's military, thus political achievements.

On one hand, the biggest accomplishment for Israel was the ability to demean Hezbollah's free mobility in the South by the deployment of the LAF and the UNIFIL across the borderline.[382] Yet, on the other, although the LAF was deployed in the South for the first time since Israeli withdrawal in 2000, Hezbollah did preserve, under the paradoxical watch of the international community, its strategic military assets in the South, and thus was not completely, but partially expulsed.[383] Hence, at minimum, resolution 1701 partitioned gains and losses between Hezbollah and Israel. Yet, to Nasrallah and Hezbollah at least, the ability to sustain and survive the 34 days have brought about resolution 1701's low key demands on Hezbollah itself.

6.5.3 Nasrallah's September 22 Victory Speech: Winning the War Through Denial

By the end of the war, more than 900,000 Lebanese have been displaced and Lebanon suffered economic damages close to $4 billion. Also, around 200 Hezbollah fighters have been killed during the war. Nevertheless, Israel, for its part, saw the displacement of 500,000 individuals, while economic damages revolved around $5 million. As well, 118 Israeli soldiers had been killed throughout. Yet, at minimum, the ability of Hezbollah to survive the war

[382] Harel, Amos, and Avi Issacharoff. *34 days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the war in Lebanon*. St. Martin's Press, 2008.
[383] Cordesman, Anthony H., William D. Sullivan, and George Sullivan. *Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war*. Vol. 29, no. 4. CSIS, 2007

became Nasrallah's best achievement. Therefore, between Hezbollah's survival and the costs of the war, Nasrallah saw in the former an unbeatable long-term victory.

Finally, on September 22, few weeks after the end of the war, Nasrallah delivered his victory speech to cherish Hezbollah's "divine" achievement before a large crowd of supporters. In terms of chants, applauses, and feelings of proudness and divinity shared across supporters and Nasrallah himself, the 2006 victory scene resembled much Nasrallah's first victory speech after Israeli withdrawal in 2000. In fact, Nasrallah employed greatly the theme of deterrence in his speech. Actually, he dedicated his words to deter Israel by denial and intimidation. Really, much like in the 2000 victory speech, Nasrallah's resort to denial was for the purpose of controlling rather than escalating the situation, especially by the end of a devastating confrontation. On these lines, below are illustrated some of Nasrallah's most compelling deterrence by denial attempts vis a vis Israel. He stated the following:

"They said they will bomb this ground and this rostrum will be destroyed to frighten the people away… The most a person expects from an enemy is to commit an error or a crime, but doesn't this enemy know who we are?"[384]

"How could a few thousand only stand and fight in such difficult circumstances, drive the naval warships out of our territorial waters… destroy the pride of the Israeli industry-the Merkava tanks, disrupt the Israeli helicopters in the day and later at night as well, and on their

[384] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, September 22, 2006.

elite brigades. I do not exaggerate, just see the Israeli media. They were turned to panicking and frightened mice by your sons."[385]

"What halted the war was the Zionists' failure."[386]

"Today, your resistance shook Israel's image: we have ended the image of the undefeated army and ended the statement of 'the state that cannot be defeated is finished', "seriously it's over"."[387]

"I say to them (Israelis) that no army in the world can take the weapons from our hands and fists as long as this proud and loyal people believe in this resistance."[388]

"I say to them blockade and shut the borders, the sea and the sky. This will not weaken the will of the resistance nor its weapons."[389]

"An era of defeats has gone, and an era of victories has arrived."[390]

Indeed, it was along these lines of denial and intimidation and the feelings of divinity and victory that Nasrallah concluded his rhetorical contribution to the 2006 war events. In this

[385] Nasrallah, Speech.
[386] Nasrallah, Speech.
[387] Nasrallah, Speech.
[388] Nasrallah, Speech.
[389] Nasrallah, Speech.
[390] Nasrallah, Speech.

fashion, Nasrallah, through emotionally compelling words, created a scenario full of losses to Israel but saturated with wins to Hezbollah, despite the heavy economical and human causalities.

6.6 An Overall Analysis of Nasrallah's Discursive Deterrence Pattern during the 34 Days War

To sum up, as the analysis of Nasrallah's speeches throughout the war days suggests, the latter's rhetorical pattern of deterrence with respect to the war events can be divided into five main categories as illustrated in the table below. First, on the eve of the abduction operation, Nasrallah, through a discursive strategy of immediate deterrence, sought to enshrine the "rules of the game" before being totally blown out. Second, as his attempt failed, Nasrallah, throughout the war days, opted for two variances of narrow deterrence. For instance, to threaten through rocket power, Nasrallah resorted to deterrence by punishment primarily. However, to defeat the resolution of the IDF soldiers in the field, Nasrallah resorted to denial throughout the ground operations. Similarly, on the lines of denial, Nasrallah, to translate Hezbollah's military achievements into a political settlement, resorted to denying all of Israel's achievements. Finally, Nasrallah, in his victory speech, resorted to general deterrence by denial predominantly, a strategy used by the latter in his 2000 speech, to control rather than escalate.[391]

[391] Freedman, Lawrence. *Deterrence*. Polity, 2004.

Speech Date	July 12	July 14, 25, 29, August 12	August 9, 12	August 14	September 22
War Event (Action by Hezbollah)	Abduction Operation	Rocket Policy	Ground Operations	Translating Military Gains to Politics	Celebrating Victory
Nasrallah's Respective Discursive Replies	Immediate Deterrence	Narrow Deterrence by Punishment	Narrow Deterrence by Denial	Narrow Deterrence by Denial	General Deterrence by Denial
Speech Excerpt	*"If they (Israelis) choose confrontation, they shall expect surprises…"*	*"You wanted an open war, and we are heading for an open war. We are ready for it. It will be a war on all levels, to Haifa, and believe me, beyond Haifa, and beyond, beyond Haifa…"*	*"This elitist unit fled like mice from the battlefield."*	*"Until now, the Israelis have not been able to take control over the borderline which they said they wanted to come back to…"*	*"An era of defeats has gone, and an era of victories has arrived."*

Table 4 The Pattern of Nasrallah's Deterrence Discourse During the 2006 War

6.7 Conclusion: Assessing the Results of Nasrallah's Deterrence Attempts During the 34 Days War

Both Hezbollah and Israel went to the war to prove resolution and deterrence.[392] Interestingly, Hezbollah was credited, especially after 2006, for its ability to resist, thus deter and survive the Israeli wars.[393] Indeed, Hezbollah, since Israeli withdrawal in 2000, has proven to have prepared itself for a future confrontation with Israel on two main levels. On the first level,

[392] Norton, Augustus Richard. *Hezbollah: A Short History-Updated Edition*. Vol. 53. Princeton University Press, 2014.
[393] Daher, Joseph. "Hezbollah, The Political Economy of Lebanon's Party of God." (2016).

Nasrallah's rocket policy was essentially developed to first, deter Israeli strikes on Lebanese civilians and second, to inflict psychological harm on the Israeli civilian populace. Hezbollah rightly understood that a campaign of sustained rocket attacks against Israeli civilians would pressure the Israeli state into a ceasefire agreement.[394] On the second level, through a ground battle of attrition, Nasrallah, through militia fighting tactics, sought to humiliate, demotivate and exhaust the IDF soldiers in the field. On these two levels, Hezbollah was able to catch Israel in surprise and to further hurt its power.[395] Markedly, Hezbollah was able to invest in asymmetric deterrence to its uttermost advantage. Since 1992 at least, Nasrallah understood that winning an all-out war with Israel is unrealistic. Therefore, the best alternative was to make war extremely painful to Israel, thus establishing deterrence.[396]

In close parallel to these military operations, Nasrallah, over the course of the war, has developed a sound discourse of deterrence through which he accompanied all military campaigns happening between Hezbollah and Israel. First, Nasrallah issued well-targeted threats by punishment to Israel. Second, he developed a psychological war of denial throughout. Resultantly, Nasrallah created a charismatic and deterrent image for himself and his words gained an enhanced appeal not only in Lebanon, but in Israel as well.[397]

Verily, the 2006 war confirmed to Hezbollah, like Israel, that when no party can fully win, deterrence remains the most plausible resort. When Hezbollah's most favorite alternative to war,

[394] Brennen, Lisa M. *Hezbollah: psychological warfare against Israel*. NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL MONTEREY CA, 2009.
[395] Daher, Aurélie. *Hezbollah: Mobilization and Power*. Oxford University Press, 2019.
[396] Makovsky, David, and Jeffrey White. *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizballah war: A preliminary assessment*. Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006.
[397] Matar, Dina. "Hassan Nasrallah: The cultivation of image and language in the making of a charismatic leader." *Communication, Culture & Critique* 8, no. 3 (2015): 433-447.

general deterrence, failed, reinstating deterrence through narrow deterrence during intra-war days gained prevalence in the discourse of Nasrallah.

In short, Israel's military supremacy has proven not to necessarily be a conclusive factor in winning the war or in defeating Hezbollah. Although both sustained considerable military and civilian damages, the ability of Hezbollah to survive the war was probably the latter's most decisive win. Most importantly, as explained in the following chapter, Nasrallah's discursive campaign, bolstered in 2006, will become, by the end of the war, a main pillar in the war of words and deterrence by punishment in the post war years. Indeed, shortly after the end of the war, Nasrallah's discourse solidly abided to a discourse of deterrence by punishment, upon which the latter sought to deter all war with Israel.

Chapter Seven

Deterrence Post 2006: Nasrallah Embraces the Discourse of Deterrence by Punishment

7.1 Introduction

Only few months after the end of the 2006 war, Hezbollah's feelings of victory soon began to intertwine with the need to reassess the costs and benefits of a future confrontation with Israel vs. maintaining a mutually acknowledged balance of deterrence. As evidence in this chapter suggests, Nasrallah embraced deterrence vis a vis Israel, in discourse and practice likewise, at the expense of an open-ended direct confrontation or war. Truly, with the conclusion of resolution 1701 in 2006, and with the advent of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Nasrallah saw in deterrence a long-term victory for Hezbollah, amid an ever changing political and military landscape, as further explained next. In this fashion, Nasrallah, who sought to deter all war with Israel after 2006, employed an unprecedented rhetoric of deterrence by punishment, on the lines of general deterrence, unlike the employment of deterrence by denial prior to 2006. Resultantly, Nasrallah issued some of his most explicit and well-targeted threats to Israel in this era, and thus triumphed deterrence by exponentially raising the costs of any future confrontation.

This chapter seeks to explain the evolution of Nasrallah's rhetoric of deterrence post the 2006 war. First, and after demonstrating the deterrence status imposed along the Lebanese and Israeli borders by the end of the war, this chapter will begin by analyzing the rationale behind

Nasrallah's embracement of the discourse of general deterrence by punishment for the first time since 1992, notwithstanding deterrence by denial. Second, the chapter will proceed by interpreting the deterrence discourse of Nasrallah, between 2007, i.e. a year after the end of the war, and 2019 inclusive, i.e. thirteen years of relative deterrence stability post 2006. Actually, this analysis will take place in light of the terms of Israel's 2008 Dahiya doctrine, and related strategic developments, upon which the latter worked on ameliorating its deterrence posture vis a vis Hezbollah after 2006. Third, with the breakout of the Syrian crisis in 2011, and amid Hezbollah's overt military involvement by 2013, Israel has steadily targeted the latter's leaders, soldiers and units on Syria soil. As a result, the Hezbollah-Israeli confrontation on Syrian soil triggered Hezbollah to respond, militarily, in avenge to Israel's assaults, yet from Lebanese territory. Hence, the 1996 "rules of the game", which had been put back in effect after 2006, and Nasrallah's rhetoric of deterrence will be assessed based on the renewed Hezbollah skirmishes, through the Shebaa farms primarily, against the IDF. Nevertheless, Israel's novel assault on Hezbollah in 2019, by targeting it in its Dahiya enclave for the first time since 2006, and its repercussions on the "rules of the game" will further highlight, amid Hezbollah's response, the viability of its deterrence posture. Along all sections, the chapter analyzes the adaptivity of Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence, along with Hezbollah's and Israel's respect to the "rules of the game" in the post war years.

7.2 The Scene in South Lebanon After the 34 Days War: Hezbollah and Israel Returning to Pre-2006 Deterrence and the "Rules of the Game"

By the end of the 2006 war and with the conclusion of resolution 1701, Hezbollah and Israel were to return to deterrence, especially that war has proven to be futile in terms of achieving

absolute wins for both sides. Thus, when both Hezbollah and Israel realized that a second round of large-scale confrontations would be devastating for both ends, and most importantly, will not have satisfying or guaranteed outcomes, that they saw in deterrence the best substitute to war.[398] So, how did resolution 1701, upon the terms of which the war came to an end, redefined the deterrence relationship and the "rules of the game" which governed the relationship between Hezbollah and Israel before 2006?

Actually, resolution 1701 came but to reinforce the terms of resolution 425, especially in what concerns the blue line and Israeli withdrawal from Southern Lebanon.[399] While resolution 425 was applied by Israeli withdrawal in 2000, resolution 1701 was applied by the end of the 2006 war. In fact, both resolutions called first, for Israeli withdrawal from Southern Lebanon and second, demarcated the Southern Lebanese borders from the Northern Israeli territories through the same blue line demarcations, notwithstanding the disputed territories of the Shebaa farms. However, with the deployment of the LAF across the borders by 2006, along with 15,000 reinforced UNIFIL troops, Hezbollah's physically explicit presence was to retreat for the first time since the year 2000.[400] Also, although the resolution reiterated the Taif agreement's and resolution 1559's calls for disarming all militias, thus Hezbollah, resolution 1701 did not spell out a specific mechanism for the process, thus voiding the practicality of disarmament provisions.[401] Hence, UNIFIL did but negligible efforts at disarming the latter as per the terms of resolution 1701. Consequently, Hezbollah survived disarmament. Hence, despite the deployment

[398] Samaan, Jean-Loup. *From war to deterrence? Israel-Hezbollah conflict since 2006*. ARMY WAR COLLEGE CARLISLE BARRACKS PA STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, 2014.
[399] Cordesman, Anthony H., William D. Sullivan, and George Sullivan. *Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war*. Vol. 29, no. 4. CSIS, 2007.
[400] Cordesman, Sullivan & Sullivan, 27.
[401] Salem, Paul. "The Aftereffects of the Israeli-Hizbollah War." *Carnegie Middle East Center: Beirut* (2006).

of the LAF and the reinforcement of the UNIFIL troops, the borders remained paradoxically, amid Hezbollah's exponential military growth, less secure than they were before the 2006 war.[402]

Indeed, although the UNIFIL's role was amplified in terms of troops and duties on paper, its real on-ground role in neutralizing the Hezbollah-Israeli front and possible breaches of the blue line remained relatively loose and indecisive, especially with the opening of the Syrian front and its repercussions on the "rules of the game". Therefore, the real destiny for deterrence and war remained in the hands of the most powerful parties: Hezbollah and Israel. As the deterrence activities between both parties operated within the same territorial parameters of the pre-2006 era, the 2006 war, at minimum, represented but a failed attempt at redefining these rules.

The relationship between Hezbollah and Israel after 2006 war, as further explained in this chapter, has had, until 2018, the "rules of the game" as the main pillar upon which sustainable and successful deterrence between Hezbollah and Israel was measured. Before returning to these rules, in 2018, Israel and Hezbollah both blatantly breached the "rules of the game" after the former's unmanned aerial assault on Hezbollah units in the Southern Suburbs of Lebanon.

Overall, by the end of the war, the front between both parties remained relatively quiet as deterrence prevailed. It was only until the eruption of the Syrian crisis in 2011 that Hezbollah considerably resumed its paramilitary activities across the Shebaa farms in retaliation to Israel's attacks against Hezbollah's cadres in Syria. Yet, by the opening of the Syrian front in 2011, and amid the need for a stable deterrence paradigm to prevent the eruption of a second round of

[402] Cordesman, Anthony H., William D. Sullivan, and George Sullivan. *Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war*. Vol. 29, no. 4. CSIS, 2007.

confrontations, Hezbollah saw in the same "rules of the game", i.e. limited cross border retaliations into the Shebaa farms, a feasible substitute for war, thus deterrence. Hence, deterrence, as the only substitute for inconclusive wars, was continuously reestablished between both parties. Most importantly, throughout the post war years, Nasrallah resorted to discursive deterrence by punishment as a means to enhance Hezbollah's deterrence posture.

7.3 The New Calculus of Nasrallah by the End of The War: Complementing Discursive General Deterrence by Denial with General Deterrence by Punishment

Nasrallah, by the end of the war, and unlike between the years 2000 and 2005, communicated some his very first and boldest general deterrence threats by punishment to Israel. While, for instance, between 2000 and 2005, Nasrallah claimed to carry "reminder operation" i.e. limited military operations against Israel across the Southern Lebanese borders, mainly the Shebaa farms,[403] the latter relatively substituted these operations with "reminder threats by punishment". Meanwhile, Hezbollah's military operations remained strictly retaliatory and deterrent vis a vis Israel's assaults in Syria by 2015.

Why did Nasrallah disclose new threats by punishment to Israel? In reality, Hezbollah understood that the costs of war outweigh the costs of deterrence, and thus, fortifying the latter became indispensable. Indeed, one year after the end of the war, Nasrallah made of deterrence a fundamental pillar of his future discursive and military strategy to avoid an all-out war with

[403] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, May 6, 2007.

Israel.[404] On these lines, Nasrallah, one the one-year anniversary of victory, in 2007, posited the following:

"Preparing for war is the best way to prevent war. This is what is referred to as a balance of terror, a balance of deterrence. When the enemy realizes – when we make it understand – that we have the ability to fight and preserve, and that we even have the power to win, that we will inhibit it and deter it from another war."[405]

Building on this fortified deterrence formula, Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence, during the post war years, has undergone a tactical transformation upon which threats by punishment have become a centerpiece of the latter's rhetoric. Therefore, following Nasrallah's 2007 appraisal for the need for creating a solid deterrence paradigm for Hezbollah, some of Nasrallah's loudest threats were issued after 2006, at a time when Hezbollah had exponentially developed its military capabilities, especially rocket power. By 2008, Israel estimated Hezbollah's rocket arsenal to be around 40,000 rockets.[406] Nevertheless, by 2018, Israeli intelligence had approximated Hezbollah's rocket force to have expanded beyond 130,000 rockets of different ranges, compared to only 14,000 rockets amassed by 2006.[407]

Along with the accumulation of fire power, Nasrallah began to slowly complete the string of threats by punishment, upon which his rhetoric of deterrence had been built during the war days. Hereby, Nasrallah's discursive strategies began, by 2007, to overlap greatly with punishment.

[404] Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to deter: deterrence failure and success in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, 2006–16." *International security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-1
[405] Sobelman, 174.
[406] Samaan, Jean-Loup. *From war to deterrence? Israel-Hezbollah conflict since 2006*. ARMY WAR COLLEGE CARLISLE BARRACKS PA STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, 2014.
[407] Shaikh, Shaan, and Ian Williams. "Hezbollah's Missiles and Rockets."

Hezbollah in general, and Nasrallah in particular, as the excerpt above illustrates, assumed a deterrence by punishment mindset, especially as he made of Hezbollah's weapons ones of deterrence rather than war. Thus, Nasrallah's discourse began to work on broadcasting Hezbollah's military preparedness as a means to deter Israel. At minimum, the 2006 war demonstrated the importance of public messages and their role in creating a "balance of terror" between adversaries.[408]

However, after Nasrallah's claim of divine victory by the end of the war, the latter was now to confront rising challenges hunting his party's victory. Truly, only two years after the end of the 34 days war, in 2008, Hezbollah began witnessing an Israeli strategic transformation upon which the 2006 divine victory, as per Hezbollah, slowly began to lose momentum.[409] On these lines, and after Israel announced the "Dahiya Doctrine", i.e. Israel's futuristic military strategy to deter and punish Hezbollah in any potential all-out war,[410] renewed challenges began to put Hezbollah's deterrence posture at jeopardy. So, how will Nasrallah reply?

7.4 The After Effects of the War on Hezbollah and Israel by 2008: The Start of a New Israeli Strategic War on Hezbollah and Nasrallah's String of Replies by Punishment

7.4.1 Israel's 2008 Dahiya Doctrine: Enfeebling Hezbollah's Deterrence Posture

[408] Samaan, Jean-Loup. *From war to deterrence? Israel-Hezbollah conflict since 2006*. ARMY WAR COLLEGE CARLISLE BARRACKS PA STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, 2014.
[409] El-Husseini, Rola. *Pax Syriana: elite politics in postwar Lebanon*. Syracuse University Press, 2012.
[410] Samaan, Jean-Loup. "The Dahya concept and Israeli military posture vis-à-vis Hezbollah since 2006." *Comparative strategy* 32, no. 2 (2013): 146-159.

By the end of one of the largest Hezbollah-Israeli confrontations, the aftereffects of the war soon began to reverberate between Hezbollah and Israel, especially that the latter saw in Hezbollah's survival an ever-growing menace to its security. Actually, the 2006 war represented but an episode, out of many, in the confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel. Only few months after the May 7, 2008 events in Lebanon, whereby the Lebanese government unilaterally and unprecedently ordered an investigation into Hezbollah's telecommunication channels, thus leading to bloody internal clashes between Hezbollah and Sunni militias mainly,[411] that Israel's Northern Commander back then, Gadi Eisenkot announced Israel's latest deterrence strategy against Hezbollah: the Dahiya doctrine. First declared in 2008, the Dahiya doctrine's prime purpose became to enhance Israel's deterrence posture vis a vis Hezbollah given that the 2006 war saw the survival of Hezbollah before Israel's supreme military. The gist of the 2008 Dahiya Doctrine stems from Israel's unsatisfactory war experience with Hezbollah during 2006. Thereby, Israel realized that for foes to coexist, establishing a solid deterrence system has become inevitable to curb potential offenses. Resultantly, through the Dahiya doctrine, Israel essentially sought to deter Hezbollah through a strategy of collective punishment and disproportionate force in any future combat.[412]

In simple terms, the Dahiya doctrine has been based on the following main pillar. As the 2006 war illustrated, eliminating all threats, especially rocket attacks, coming from Hezbollah are not feasibly possible. Thus, Israel's homeland cannot be totally secure. As a result, deterring Hezbollah can only be better achieved if collective punishment is applied on the Lebanese

[411] Rizkallah, Amanda. "The paradox of power-sharing: stability and fragility in postwar Lebanon." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 12 (2017): 2058-2076.
[412] Samaan, Jean-Loup. "The Dahya concept and Israeli military posture vis-à-vis Hezbollah since 2006." *Comparative strategy* 32, no. 2 (2013): 146-159.

government as a whole, thus Hezbollah, through a full-scale campaign on all Lebanese soil.[413] In different words, Hezbollah, as per the doctrine, will be taking Lebanon hostage in any future war. By putting Hezbollah and the Lebanese government within the same parameters of threat perception, and by using massive and disproportionate force, beyond Hezbollah's popular and military strongholds, Israel seeks to achieve deterrence against Hezbollah.[414] While in 2006, most of Israel's airstrikes were concentrated within Hezbollah's domains, i.e. the Beirut Southern Suburbs and the South, the Dahiya doctrine sought to widen Israel's attacks to include the entire country of Lebanon.

Thus, while Hezbollah, after 2006, began to increase exponentially its offensive capabilities, especially rocket power, Israel, in its turn, counterbalanced Hezbollah's military growth, through the Dahiya doctrine. Most importantly, Israel, through this doctrine, created a deterrence posture which relies heavily on punishment.[415] Hence, through this renewed strategy, the pendulum of deterrence between both parties was readjusted by Israel though reciprocal threats of punishment. While Israel's deterrence strategy vis a vis Hezbollah was best vested in the Dahiya Doctrine, Hezbollah's replies of punishment, began, only few years later, to unfold through Nasrallah's war of words.

In sum, while the "rules of the game", until the eruption of the Syrian war at least, were functioning within normalcy across the borderline between Hezbollah and Israel, the unraveling

[413] Samaan, 152.
[414] Khalidi, Rashid I. "From the Editor: The Dahiya Doctrine, Proportionality, and War Crimes." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 44, no. 1 (2014): 5-13.
[415] Samaan, Jean-Loup. *From war to deterrence? Israel-Hezbollah conflict since 2006*. ARMY WAR COLLEGE CARLISLE BARRACKS PA STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, 2014.

of the Dahiya doctrine in 2008 represented a pivotal juncture between a brief era of victory and an era of resumed challenges to Hezbollah. Markedly, the Dahiya doctrine became Hezbollah's first direct strategic and long-term deterrence-based threat emanating from Israel itself after the 2006 war. Yet, Nasrallah soon articulated heated replies to Eisenkot's new conduct of war and deterrence, as elaborated next.

7.4.2 Nasrallah's Reply by Punishment to the Dahiya Doctrine: Consolidating Hezbollah's Deterrence Posture

After the 2006 war and adding to Hezbollah's realization for the need for deterrence, especially that winning over Israel, absolutely, is not realistically feasible, the Dahiya doctrine became one of the main focal points upon which deterrence between Hezbollah and Israel has been measured. This measurement has taken place on the strategic and military level and in Nasrallah's war of words on the lines of deterrence by punishment. By acknowledging the deep repercussions of Israel's new doctrine of collective punishment, Nasrallah, since 2008, has addressed the Israelis through several speeches in direct or indirect reply to the Dahiya doctrine, and on the lines of reciprocal deterrence. On these lines, Nasrallah, on February 16, 2010, posited the following about the Dahiya doctrine:

"When we successfully faced Israel's claims of decisive and swift wins (during the 2006 war), this discourse (of decisive and swift wins) began to back down… Thus, they came up with the Dahiya doctrine."[416]

[416] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, February 16, 2010.

Most importantly, and in this same speech held by Nasrallah, the latter expressed a series of bold, daring and groundbreaking deterrence replies by heightened punishment to Israel's Dahiya doctrine. In this fashion, Nasrallah threatened the following:

During the last war (2006), we told you that if you hit Beirut, we will hit Tel Aviv. Last year, on the August 14 ceremony, we told you that, if you go to war… and if you hit Dahiya, we will hit Tel Aviv… However, today, I tell them, if you destroy a building in Dahiya we will destroy buildings in Tel Aviv."[417]

"Even more, today, I want to tell the Israelis, not only if you hit Dahiya we will hit Tel Aviv, if you hit the Rafiq Hariri International Airport in Beirut, we will hit the Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv."[418]

"If you hit our ports, we will hit your ports. If you hit our oil refineries, we will hit your oil refineries. If you hit our factories, we will hit your factories. If you hit our power stations, we will hit your power stations."[419]

"This is our reply to the Dahiya Doctrine."[420]

Indeed, Nasrallah's rocket policy after the 2006 war was further bolstered by Hezbollah's boosted military capabilities, best translated through the nature of threats issued by the latter.[421] Nevertheless, by 2010 at least, and as illustrated in the above excerpts, Nasrallah's speeches

[417] Nasrallah, Speech.
[418] Nasrallah, Speech.
[419] Nasrallah, Speech.
[420] Nasrallah, Speech.
[421] Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to deter: deterrence failure and success in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, 2006–16." *International security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-196.

worked proactively on broadcasting Hezbollah's ameliorated military capabilities. Truly, through the threats of punishment, Nasrallah sought to boost Hezbollah's deterrence posture vis a vis Israel's Dahiya doctrine. For instance, while Israel threatened to widen its attacks in any upcoming war, Nasrallah, in a much similar fashion, remarkably threatened, through rocket power, to first begin Hezbollah's attacks from the city of "Haifa", which, during the 2006 war, was one of Nasrallah's soundest threat by punishment, as explained in the previous chapter.

Even more importantly than striking Haifa per se, Nasrallah's reply to the Dahiya doctrine had put the city of Tel Aviv, the Ben Gurion Airport and Israel's civilian infrastructure at the heart of Hezbollah's future targets. Resultantly, the same way Israel sought to reorganize the asymmetric engagements with Hezbollah, on the lines of increasing the costs of recovery, especially civilian causalities and infrastructure damages,[422] Nasrallah replied in relatively equivocal magnitude by threatening to destroy Israel's infrastructure far beyond the Northern territories. At minimum, Nasrallah's deterrence by punishment strategy after 2006 had been primarily intended to considerably raise the costs of any possible war with Israel. In essence, deterrence by punishment tends to increase the cost of an attack, thus effectively deterring it.[423]

On the lines of this strategy, Nasrallah, as explained next, proceeded in issuing unprecedented threats by punishment, at least 10 years after the end of the war, thus making of deterrence a strategic priority not to withstand but to further enshrine over time. Most of Nasrallah's speeches after 2006 addressed Israel on the lines of deterrence, especially by the advent of the Syrian crisis and the challenges imposed on the "rules of the game" as explained in

[422] Marei, Fouad Gehad. "Dahiya Doctrine." *Conflict in the Modern Middle East: An Encyclopedia of Civil War, Revolutions and Regime Change* (2020): 75-76.
[423] Mazarr, Michael J. *Understanding Deterrence*. RAND, 2018.

the upcoming sections. However, meanwhile, some of Nasrallah's boldest, well-targeted and most resonating threats after 2010, and in reply to the Dahiya doctrine, came in 2016 and 2017 as further elaborated below.

7.4.3 Nasrallah's Loudest Threats by Punishment Between 2016 and 2017: An Ever-Growing Commitment to Deterrence

Significantly, Nasrallah's threats by punishment, over the years, have become more targeted and specific in nature. As the excerpt illustrated below demonstrates, not only did Nasrallah threaten to hit specific targets across Israel, the latter's threats nevertheless augmented in nature to further embrace the psychological effects which Hezbollah's rockets have created vis a vis civilian unrest in Israel. In this fashion, on February 16, 2016, Nasrallah articulated some of his most direct and unprecedented threats, since the 2006 war. Nevertheless, Nasrallah, in this speech, like in several others, explicitly directed his threats against Eisenkot's doctrine. On these lines, Nasrallah threatened the following:

"Lebanon, today, owns a nuclear bomb. I am not exaggerating at all… Few rockets from our side, coupled to the ammonia tanks in Haifa will result in a nuclear bomb effect."[424]

"You, Eisenkot, to be able to destroy al Dahiya, you need the most powerful air force… but we, (Hezbollah), with few rockets (can cause immense damage to Haifa). [425]

Clearly, Nasrallah's threats by punishment, as articulated in the above excerpt, have been intertwined with a psychological war of words, especially when the latter claimed a rather

[424] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, February 16, 2016.
[425] Nasrallah, Speech.

psychological possession of a nuclear bomb. At minimum, Nasrallah's atomic bomb claim is reasonable and realistic. Thus, if Nasrallah's threat is executed, it could lead to the death of at least 800,000 citizens in the city of Haifa alone.[426] Actually, on the military level per se, Hezbollah's threat little confronted Israel's military apparatus. Instead, Hezbollah was attacking Israel through its civilians, thus counterbalancing Eisenkot's strategy of collective punishment. In fact, Hezbollah in general and Nasrallah in particular, have always calculated the psychological impact of any operation against Israel.[427] Thereby, through these rockets, and on the same lines of their hurting psychological effects, Nasrallah sought to deter Israel.

Interestingly, Israel, in 2017, declared its decision to empty the ammonia tanks in Haifa, thus ending the controversy surrounding the dangers posed by these tanks, especially after Nasrallah's sound threats.[428] The emptying of the ammonia tanks is a clear indication to the credibility of Nasrallah's threats among Israeli decision makers.[429] At minimum, if Israel's decision were to indicate a fact, it demonstrates that Israel now trusts Nasrallah's threats to a very considerable extent. Really, Nasrallah himself, in a speech carried on February 16, 2017, recognized Israel's acknowledgment of the credibility of his threats. On these lines, Nasrallah stated the following:

"Some considered that the Israeli decision to empty the ammonia tanks in Haifa to be a sign of an approaching war on Lebanon…. I say to those, this is an indication of the enemy's trust in the

[426] Jack Khoury and Reuters, "Nasrallah: A Strike on Israeli Ammonia Tanks Would Lead to Nuclear-like Damage," April 10, 2018, https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/.premium-nasrallah-threatens-nuclear-like-strike-on-israeli-ammonia-tanks-1.5405529.
[427] Schleifer, Ron. "Psychological operations: A new variation on an age old art: Hezbollah versus Israel." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 1 (2006): 1-19.
[428] staff, TOI, Shoshanna Solomon, David Horovitz, Benjy Singer, Afp, Yuras Karmanau, Raphael Ahren, et al. "Haifa Ammonia Tank Emptied after Years-Long Saga," September 1, 2017. https://www.timesofisrael.com/haifa-ammonia-tank-emptied-after-years-long-saga/.
[429] Israeli Environment Ministry to Close Haifa Ammonia Storage Tank. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://english.almanar.com.lb/199010

power and capability of the resistance in Lebanon because (the Israelis know) that when it (the resistance) threatens, it can execute its threats."[430]

What deterred was not only the threat itself, but the fact that it was rather believed.[431] Nevertheless, in this same speech, Nasrallah further augmented his threats of punishment beyond the now-emptied ammonia tanks per se, thus signaling to Israel its inability, at any instance, to escape Hezbollah's rocket policy of punishment. On these magnetized lines of deterrence by punishment, Nasrallah threatened the following:

"Today… I call on the Israelis not only to empty the ammonia tanks in Haifa, but I also call on them to dismantle the Dimona nuclear reactor… We will transform the Israeli nuclear weapons which pose a threat to the entire region… to a threat on Israel itself."[432]

Evidently, Nasrallah refused to constrict his threats of punishment to one target and sought to demonstrate Hezbollah's ability to strike anywhere and anytime. Verily, Nasrallah's loudest threats by punishment came several years after the 2006 war and after Hezbollah's direct involvement in Syria. Why? In reality, Nasrallah, whose party had been preoccupied in the Syrian scene by 2011, as explained below, sought to communicate to Israel Hezbollah's upgraded operative and offensive advantages which it had gained through its involvement in Syria. Therefore, in an attempt to strike a balance between Hezbollah's distraction from the direct military combat with Israel, Nasrallah communicated some of his loudest threats to the latter since 2006.[433] As a result, through this explicit commitment to deterrence, and by

[430] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, February 16, 2017.
[431] Morgan, Patrick M. *Deterrence now*. Vol. 89. Cambridge University Press, 2003.
[432] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, February 16, 2016.
[433]Dekel, U., Siboni, G., & Einav, O. (2017). The quiet decade: In the aftermath of the Second Lebanon War, 2006-2016. Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies.

promising Israel upsetting attacks in any future confrontation, Nasrallah further bolstered his rhetoric of deterrence towards Israel.

7.4.4 Analyzing Nasrallah's Discourse of Deterrence by Punishment Towards Israel Between 2006 and 2017

The post war period has put Hezbollah's deterrence before a new opportunity and a challenge at the same time. In fact, Israel's Dahiya doctrine has remodeled Israel's strategy against Hezbollah in terms of deterrence. Eisenkot's doctrine incredibly transformed the confrontation with Hezbollah from one occurring between the latter and Israel, to one happening between Lebanon, Hezbollah and Israel likewise, especially that Israel threatened to punish Hezbollah through Lebanon's infrastructure, thus collectively.[434]

Hence, Hezbollah, amid an exponential rise in challenges, was to revamp a solid deterrence posture against Israel and through essentially punitive threats. Through these threats, Nasrallah was trying to generate a deterrence balance vis a vis the Dahiya doctrine. Actually, until the 2006 war, most, if not all of Nasrallah's threats were by denial par excellence. Thus, for the first time in an era of relative peace and on the lines of general deterrence, Nasrallah, instead of solely denying Israeli military and intelligence abilities as in the period prior to the war, communicated threats by punishment, and thus fortified deterrence by articulating clear-cut targets as illustrated in the above excerpts.

Nasrallah's threats by punishment operated on the following premise. When Nasrallah acquired transformative military capabilities, he was able to level-up the magnitude of his

[434] Samaan, Jean-Loup. *From war to deterrence? Israel-Hezbollah conflict since 2006*. ARMY WAR COLLEGE CARLISLE BARRACKS PA STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, 2014.

threats. Unlike in the period before the war, Nasrallah, after 2006, by articulating targeted threats by punishment, was revealing, indirectly, Hezbollah's upgraded capabilities. At minimum, new capabilities cannot be kept a secret if the deterrence posture of the party in question was to be enhanced.[435] Thereby, Nasrallah's reasonable expression of Hezbollah's military capabilities, through threats by punishment, has boosted the effectiveness of Hezbollah's deterrence force. Indeed, Nasrallah accompanied his threats with a clear-cut commitment to resolve, thus credibility.[436]

In fact, the 2006 war made of Nasrallah's threat a credible endeavor. Put differently, Nasrallah, during 2006, executed most, if not all of the threats which he issued by punishment throughout.[437] Thus, his threats gained considerable credibility. With that said, the messages of deterrence by punishment against Israel have multiplied over the years, especially after the Israeli declaration of the Dahiya doctrine. On all levels, Nasrallah's ultimate purpose was first to preserve, and second, to enhance its deterrence posture.

Nevertheless, to preserve the element of surprise, which could be a game changer in any potential war, Nasrallah, in several occasions, confirmed Hezbollah's acquisition of "surprising" tactics and weapons of "unknown" nature to Israel. For instance, on September 3, 2012, during an interview with Al Mayadeen TV station, Nasrallah, on the lines of denial, posited the following:

[435] Dougherty, James E., and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff. *Contending theories of international relations*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1971.
[436] Sobelman, 182.
[437] Matar, Dina. "Hassan Nasrallah: The cultivation of image and language in the making of a charismatic leader." *Communication, Culture & Critique* 8, no. 3 (2015): 433-447.

"At the end of the day, there will be missiles of launchers that you will not know about and will thus remain invulnerable to your first strike… This forms a real deterrence capability and a deterrent force."[438]

On these lines of denial and adding to Nasrallah's unpreceded employment of deterrence by punishment, which, to a very large extent has become Nasrallah's fundamental pillar for enshrining Hezbollah's deterrence posture, the latter did not totally avert his attention away from deterrence by denial in his discourse. At minimum, Nasrallah's overall use of deterrence by denial has fed, in the era post the war, the purpose of making Israel doubt its intelligence and military efforts, thus undermining its ability to defeat Hezbollah in any future round.[439] Thus, while deterrence by punishment was to hurt Israel, thus deter it, denial backed up Nasrallah's deterrence by punishment, especially in what concerns enfeebling Israel's deterrence posture vis a vis its people and Hezbollah likewise.

As explained next, until Hezbollah's direct involvement in the Syrian war, the front between Hezbollah and Israel, in Southern Lebanon remained relatively quiet. However, the Syrian war, which had erupted by 2011, had put the "rules of the game" between Hezbollah and Israel in Southern Lebanon to test for the first time since 2006. By the advent of the Syrian war, Israel confronted the latter on Syrian soil, while Hezbollah's replies to Israel's operations against it came from Lebanese territory. Therefore, the chapter proceeds by analyzing Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian crisis and its effects on the "rules of the game" with respect to Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence.

[438] Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to deter: deterrence failure and success in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, 2006–16." *International security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-196.
[439] Sobelman, 189.

7.5 Hezbollah and Israel in the Syrian War: Nasrallah's Discourse of Immediate Deterrence by Punishment and the "Rules of the Game"

7.5.1 Hezbollah's Involvement in the Syrian Crisis: Opening a New Front for Confrontations with Israel

The Arab spring, whose revolutions swept across the Arab World by 2011, has put Israel, Syria, Iran and Hezbollah at the heart of a new landscape for confrontations, especially when Syria's turn in the queue of revolts showed up. Actually, the Syrian revolution, which unfolded by 2011, soon transformed into a bloody civil war between different combating factions, most prominent among which have been the Syrian army, its defects and ISIS. As a result, by 2012, the Assad regime, which began to dramatically lose control over large areas of Syrian soil, called its allies, like Hezbollah, to support it in preserving military control over its territories.[440] What began as a revolution, soon faced by a violent pro-Assad response, transformed the scene in Syria to a political play whereby the "axis of resistance", i.e. Iran, Syria and Hezbollah, was confronted by the Western camp, which was orchestrated by the US and called for Assad's resignation.[441]

Until 2012, Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian crisis remained covert and very limited. However, in the Spring of 2013, Hezbollah, through the Qusayr battle, began to openly fight against rebels.[442] Nevertheless, that same year, Nasrallah explicitly articulated his party's position vis a vis the developments in Syria. At minimum, watching Assad's regime crumbling

[440] Ali, Mohanad Hage. *Power Points Defining the Syria-Hezbollah Relationship*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019.
[441] Mohns, Erik, and André Bank. "Syrian Revolt Fallout: End of the Resistance Axis?." *Middle East Policy* 19, no. 3 (2012): 25-35.
[442] O'Bagy, Elizabeth. "The fall of al-Qusayr." *Institute for the Study of War* 6 (2013).

before a political ploy, as per Hezbollah's perceptions, was not a feasible option for the latter's allies. Hence, Nasrallah, who, suspicions about his party's military involvement in the Syrian crisis began to grow within Lebanese circles by 2012, declared Hezbollah's position from these events. On these lines, on May 25, 2013, Nasrallah stated the following:

"Syria is the backbone of the resistance and the support of the resistance. The resistance cannot sit with its hands crossed while its backbone is made vulnerable and its support is being broken, or else we will be stupid."[443]

Hezbollah's commitment to defending the Syrian regime stems from the strategic alliance upon which the relationship between both parties has been formed, especially against Israel. In fact, Hezbollah's military intervention in Syria has been based on the following three main pillars. First, Hezbollah, by safeguarding the Assad regime, sought to secure the "axis of resistance" which stems from Iran to Syria and Lebanon, through Hezbollah primarily. Second, Hezbollah was to preserve Syria as a major supply line for weaponry after Iran. Third, on the lines of the Sunni Shia rivalry, Hezbollah has been struggling in the Syrian muds to prevent the takeover of the Assad regime by a Sunni dominated establishment. In all three events, the fall of the Assad regime would result in the erosion of Hezbollah's deterrence posture vis a vis Israel.[444]

Hence, in the collapse of the Assad regime was first, a heavy strategic loss for Hezbollah, and a long-term victory for Israel. Thereby, Hezbollah's direct military intervention, which boldened and became more overt over the years, has precipitated a confrontation between Israel

[443]MARCH, ON. "The Transformation of Hezbollah by Its Involvement in Syria." (2016).
[444] Sullivan, Marisa. *Hezbollah in Syria*. Institute for the Study of War, 2014.

and Hezbollah, which extended from Syrian soil to Lebanese Southern territories. While Israel targeted Hezbollah fighters in Syria, Hezbollah retaliated from Lebanese land.

Actually, Israel's assaults took two main forms. First, Israel saw in the transfer of possible Syrian chemical weapons or ballistic missiles to Hezbollah a defy to the status quo in the South of Lebanon. Thereby, Israel, struck, on multiple events, presumed arms supply convoys or storages, claimed to belong to Hezbollah, on Syrian soil.[445] For instance, in 2013, Israel destroyed the shipment of ballistic missiles (SA-17 surface-to-air missiles and Iranian Fateh-110 mobile surface-to-surface missiles) intended to reach Hezbollah in Lebanon.[446] By 2018 inclusive, Israel had conducted more than 100 attacks against Hezbollah and Iranian assets in Syria.[447] At minimum, Hezbollah's rocket arsenal, upon which its deterrence posture is fundamentally and primarily based upon, has in great part been dependent on the Syrian regime's supply of these arms, notwithstanding Iran.

Second, Israel, saw in the Syrian crisis an easy score to target some of Hezbollah's most prominent leaders directly participating in the Syrian crisis. Indeed, Hezbollah's military replies, from Lebanese territory, came in line with these assaults in particular. Thereby, the Lebanese Israeli front was reopened for sporadic confrontations between both parties. Next is analyzed Hezbollah's and Israel's most prominent respective attacks during the war days in Syria. Most importantly, the chapter explains the repercussions of the war on the "rules of the game", upon

[445] Samaan, Jean-Loup. *From war to deterrence? Israel-Hezbollah conflict since 2006*. ARMY WAR COLLEGE CARLISLE BARRACKS PA STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, 2014.
[446] Samaan, Jean-Loup. "Missile warfare and violent non-state actors: the case of Hezbollah." *Defence studies* 17, no. 2 (2017): 156-170.
[447] Jones, Seth G., and Maxwell B. Markusen. *The Escalating Conflict with Hezbollah in Syria*. Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2018.

and the solidity of the deterrence posture of Hezbollah. This analysis takes place with respect to first, the Israeli attacks and Hezbollah's retaliations, and second, with respect to Nasrallah's rhetorical replies of deterrence.

7.5.2 Hezbollah and Israel Working within the "Rules of the Game" Between 2015 and 2018: Nasrallah's Replies by Punishment

Hezbollah's direct military intervention in the Syrian conflict triggered a renewed within the "rules of the game" confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel until 2018. In fact, this confrontation has created a chain of offensive and retaliatory actions by Israel and Hezbollah respectively. On many occasions, Israel targeted Hezbollah soldiers, or even prominent figures in the party, on Syrian soil. Although these offenses were new in nature and happened for the first time since 2006, Hezbollah, in return, exploited the Shebaa farms to become the theatre for Hezbollah's replies, much like in the years leading to 2006.

Between 2013 and 2014, the frequency of Israeli attacks against Hezbollah in Syria have increased exponentially, thus indicating Hezbollah's larger involvement in the Syrian war, especially in the Damascus suburbs.[448] Resultantly, by 2015, the confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel epitomized as the former suffered from the assassination of some of its star commanders, including Jihad Mughniyeh, Samir al Kuntar and several other fighters. Indeed, by 2015, the assassination of the former leaders transformed the game between both parties into one of "tit for tat". Actually, to the assassination of all Hezbollah cadres in Syria, Hezbollah's military replies were in line with the "rules of the game", until 2018 at least when Israel targeted

[448] ALAMI, Mona A. "Hezbollah's Military Involvement in Syria and its Wider Regional Role." *Dirasat* 21 (2017): 1-36.

Hezbollah, for the first time since 2006 in its Dahiya stronghold. How? First, all of Hezbollah's replies were confined to the Shebaa farms. Second, Hezbollah only targeted, limitedly, i.e. to a reasonable extent of causalities and material damages, the IDF soldiers patrolling in this area, in a clear sign of mere deterrence rather than escalation.

On these lines, the assassination of the above leaders, amid Nasrallah's rhetorical replies and Hezbollah's military retaliation, interestingly put to test Hezbollah's deterrence posture. Markedly, within the parameters set by the "rules of the game", Hezbollah, and in reply to Mughniyeh's assassination, fired a guided missile into the Shebaa farms, thus killing two IDF soldiers. Likewise, in reply to Kuntar's assassination, Hezbollah, in a very calculated deterrence retaliation, struck two Israeli vehicles around the farms area.[449] Thereby, at minimum, until 2015, the "rules of the game" dictated Hezbollah's and Israel's deterrence comportment on Lebanese territories strictly. However, Hezbollah's entanglement in the Syrian crisis triggered the latter to respond to Israel's assaults against it in Syria, yet from Lebanese soil. Therefore, the narrative for the "rules of the game" expanded to include retaliations from Lebanese territories, yet tied to events happening outside Lebanon itself, i.e. in Syria.

On most of these occasions, Nasrallah affirmed Hezbollah's right in retaliation to protect, at minimum, his party's deterrence posture vis a vis Israel. In fact, either before every retaliatory operation or after, Nasrallah would appear on TV and promise the Israelis either a reply or would herald the success of the operation. Really, the routine and string of "speech and action" has accompanied Hezbollah throughout the war days in Syria. Put differently, for most Israeli offenses, Nasrallah deterred rhetorically and through military action. Thereby, in this fashion,

[449] Alami, 31.

Nasrallah, after the assassination of Mughniyeh, appeared on TV shortly after Hezbollah's reply to explain the rationale behind the party's retaliatory response, especially that the assassination of Mughniyeh was one of the very first Israeli assaults on Hezbollah's leaders in Syria. In this vein, Nasrallah posited, on January 30, 2015, the following deterrence formulae:

"The result of the (Hezbollah) operation is the following: They killed us in broad daylight, we killed them in broad daylight…"[450]

"(We destroyed) two vehicles in exchange for (the Israelis destroying) two vehicles…"[451]

"Dead and wounded (Israelis) in exchange for (Hezbollah) martyrs."[452]

"Rockets in exchange for Rockets."[453]

Nasrallah, through the above "tit for tat" deterrence equations, was trying to instate deterrence through proportional retaliations. However, although Nasrallah posited that Hezbollah's reply, will be in equal magnitude and in close proportionality to Israel's offenses, evidence suggests that while Hezbollah suffered the deaths of very prominent figures, Israel only lost soldiers or officers patrolling in the Shebaa farms. Thus, at minimum, Hezbollah's calculated military replies but served the prime purpose of demonstrating the party's readiness and commitment to deterrence.

[450] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, January 30, 2015.
[451] Nasrallah, Speech.
[452] Nasrallah, Speech.
[453] Nasrallah, Speech.

Also, in a very similar manner, yet this time, not before, but shortly after the assassination of Kuntar, Nasrallah articulated his threats to Israel, prior to the anticipated Hezbollah response. On these lines, Nasrallah, on December 21, 2015, posited the following:

"We have the right to respond to the assassination in the place and time and in the way we see suitable. This is our right. I add to you tonight, we, in Hezbollah, will practice this right."[454]

Markedly, Nasrallah's "suitable place and timing" for all of the party's retaliatory operations until 2018, was but the Shebaa farms, in a clear indication to Hezbollah's abidance to the quiet "rules of game". Nevertheless, Nasrallah, by stressing a "suitable place and time" further broadcasted the latter's calculated retaliations in a clear avoidance to an all-out war.[455] To a large extent, Nasrallah's discursive and military replies to Mughniyeh's and Kuntar's assassinations have since then represented Nasrallah's style of rhetorical deterrence vis a vis Israeli assaults against Hezbollah in Syria.

In short, Nasrallah's deterrence replies by punishment remained, throughout, strictly constrained by the bounds set by the "rules of the game". Resultantly, the equilibrium of deterrence between Hezbollah and Israel, across the Southern Lebanese and Northern Israeli borders, was maintained, but only until 2019, when Israel staged a transformative assault on Hezbollah on Lebanese territory.

7.5.3 Hezbollah and Israel Working Beyond the "Rules of the Game" in 2019: Israel's Novel Offense: Nasrallah's Reply by Punishment

[454] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, December 21, 2015.
[455] Al-Aloosy, Massaab, Massaab Al-Aloosy, and Yurova. *The Changing Ideology of Hezbollah*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Although Israel's offenses against Hezbollah in Syria were novel and one-of-a kind in terms of strategy since 2006, they still occurred in a war zone and in an open front for conflicts. In turn, Hezbollah's replies remained confined to the Shebaa farms. However, in 2019, Israel staged a blunt breach to the "rules of the game" which essentially dictated Hezbollah's and Israel's comportment on the Lebanese front after 2006. In fact, this breach was vested in an attack against Hezbollah in its homeland, Lebanon, and beyond the Shebaa farms, or Israel's offenses in Syria. On Sunday August 25, two Israeli drones have been reported to have crashed in the Southern suburbs of Beirut, i.e. Hezbollah's Shiite stronghold.[456] According to Hezbollah's estimates, to which Israel remained silent, the two drones have been equipped with 5.5 kilos of C4 explosives, and were to carry a still unidentified suicide attack. While the first drone crashed and failed at achieving its object due to a technical failure, the second drone successfully exploded in one of Hezbollah's media offices, thus wounding three people.[457]

Remarkably, Israel's attack represented the first of its kind since the 2006 war. At minimum, if Israel's attack, which targeted Hezbollah straight in its Dahiya enclave, survived away from Hezbollah's reply, this attack was to reshuffle the "rules of the game" between both parties, thus opening a new front for confrontations, other than the Shebaa farms at least. Yet, in comprehension to the drastic repercussions of such an offense on the deterrence posture of Hezbollah, Nasrallah, in at least three consecutive speeches, addressed the attack and Hezbollah's resolve and readiness to retaliate. First, on the same day of the assault, on August 25, 2019, Nasrallah appeared on screen and highlighted before his people and the Israelis the

[456] Ben Hubbard, "Hezbollah Says Drones That Crashed in Beirut Suburbs Came From Israel," August 25, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/25/world/middleeast/israel-drones-beirut-hezbollah.html.
[457] "Explosive-Laden Drones Targeted Precision Missile Tech in Beirut - Report," August 28, 2019, https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/hezbollah-israeli-drones-were-carrying-explosives-599799.

severity of the Israeli attack. Also, he pledged the Israelis an inevitable reply. On these lines, he stated the following:

"This is the first (Israeli) act of aggression since August 14, 2006."[458]

"If we remain silent to this breach, it will establish a dangerous track for Lebanon. We will not allow such a track to happen, and we will do everything to prevent a track of this kind from happening."[459]

"I say to the Israeli army, from tonight, stand on one foot by the wall, and wait for us… one, two, three or four days, just await."[460]

Nevertheless, while Hezbollah's threat of retaliation remained, in the latter speech, relatively opaque but highly entangled with a psychological war, only few days later, on August 31, Nasrallah readdressed the Israelis about the most likely nature of the reply. On these lines, Nasrallah articulated a heated threat to Israel by positing the following:

"The response will be from Lebanon… and not necessarily in the Shebaa farms but anywhere along the border."[461]

Unprecedently, Nasrallah, and as well for the first time since 2006, explicitly hinted to a reply which could occur beyond the Shebaa farms. Why? With little doubt, Israel's assault represented a bold attempt at altering the "rules of the game" in which Hezbollah saw a successful deterrence deal between both parties. Thereby, Nasrallah, to deter such an attempt,

[458] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, August 25, 2019.
[459] Nasrallah, Speech.
[460] Nasrallah, Speech.
[461] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, August 31, 2019.

threatened to respond, as well, beyond these rules, in a clear indication of intolerance and most importantly, deterrence. Resultantly, on September 1, 2019, Hezbollah, in payback, fired several antitank missiles, directly into the town of "Avivim" in Northern Israel, and not into the Shebaa farms, thus provoking Israel to reply with artillery shelling. While Hezbollah claimed destroying a tank, thus wounding and killing its personnel, Israel refuted claims of causalities.[462] Truly, this event suggests that Hezbollah was eager to sending the message of commitment to deterrence, thus mobilizing against any threat posed by Israel, within or beyond the "rules of the game". Yet, both Israel and Hezbollah were clearly unexcited for escalation, as the attacks and counterattacks remained relatively limited,[463] thus triumphing deterrence, again. One day later, on September 2, 2019, Nasrallah, appeared on screen and explained Hezbollah's logic behind the response. On these lines, Nasrallah, by employing deterrence by denial, stated the following:

"In the past, when were attacked, where did we usually respond? We responded in the Shebaa farms… The Lebanese borders with occupied Palestine 1948… has been, for the enemy, and for decades, one of the biggest intolerable red lines. Yesterday, however, the Islamic resistance broke Israel's decade-long intolerable red line."[464]

"If Netanyahu wanted to change the equation of deterrence, we were yet able to consolidate this equation."[465]

[462] Al Jazeera, "Israel, Hezbollah Exchange Fire at Lebanon Border," September 2, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/israeli-army-fires-lebanon-hezbollah-missile-attack-190901134806880.html.
[463] Liz Sly James McAuley, "Hezbollah Retaliates against Israel with a Missile; Israel Fires Back at Lebanon," The Washington Post (WP Company, September 1, 2019), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/israel-strikes-targets-in-southern-lebanon-after-apparent-hezbollah-missile-attack/2019/09/01/05bca8ae-ccc0-11e9-a620-0a91656d7db6_story.html.
[464] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, September 2, 2019.
[465] Nasrallah, Speech.

Adding to Nasrallah's celebration, he nevertheless proceeded, in a fourth speech, by further acknowledging Hezbollah's ability to crush Israel's attempt at resetting the "rules of the game" between both parties. Notwithstanding that Israel's violation of the Lebanese airspace has become a constant, thus clearly breaching all rules, especially after 2006 and after the announcement of the Dahiya doctrine, on September 10, 2019, Nasrallah stressed Hezbollah's achievement at preserving these rules. In this fashion, he stated the following:

"The Lebanese have downplayed the last Israeli attempt at changing the rules of engagement in place since 2006."[466]

Clearly, Nasrallah saw in his party's operation a suitable response to Israel's attempt at stretching the "rules of the game". Indeed, if these rules were stretched successfully, Hezbollah's relative achievement in 2006 would have been dented, especially in what concerns the return of both parties to deterrence per se by the end of the war. Thereby, in the "rules of the game", Nasrallah saw an equation of deterrence not to abandon at any cost. Building on this premise, Nasrallah's reply came unconventionally, much like Israel's novel assault on Lebanon. As a result, while Israel maneuvered beyond the parameters set by these rules, Hezbollah replied, tactically, outside the Shebaa farms, to halt any damage to its solidly instated deterrence posture.

7.5.4 Analyzing Hezbollah's Deterrence Posture and the "Rules of the Game" by the Advent of the Syrian War

With the opening of the Syrian front, tensions between Hezbollah and Israel have progressively increased over the years. First, until 2018, both offenses and replies between both

[466] Nasrallah Hassan, Speech, September 10, 2019.

parties remained confined to the "rules of the game", as earlier explained. Nevertheless, all of Hezbollah's replies were "isolated", i.e. through the Shebaa farms primarily, and "calculated", i.e. limited in nature.[467] Truly, Nasrallah deliberately delivered "slaps" to Israel, but not hard enough, in order to preserve the status quo of mutual deterrence between both parties.[468] At minimum, the sporadic moves and countermoves across the Lebanese-Israeli borders had been less likely to turn violent, and reflected more possibly the war environment between both parties in Syria.[469]

However, second, in 2019, as Israel violated the "rules of the game", by targeting Hezbollah straightly in the Southern suburbs of Beirut, the latter as well replied beyond the "rules of the game" and thus responded directly into Israeli Northern territory. Although the 1996 "rules of the game" remained Hezbollah's benchmark for its replies along the war days in Syria, except for Israel's gross offence in 2019, these events have demonstrated that Hezbollah is ready to retaliate beyond these rules, at any instance where Israel's offenses are perceived as threatening enough. Therefore, the deterrence equation which Hezbollah forged after the 2019 Israeli assault was a proportionality in response, whether within or beyond the 1996 rules. Notably, across both levels, the linguistics of Nasrallah's deterrence discourse remained the same. In other words, deterrence by punishment, whether within or outside the 1996 "rules of the game" dominated Nasrallah's discourses on all events.[470] Nevertheless, the deterrence posture of Hezbollah was, to

[467] Al-Aloosy, Massaab, Massaab Al-Aloosy, and Yurova. *The Changing Ideology of Hezbollah*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
[468] Blanford, Nicholas. *Hezbollah's Evolution: From Lebanese Militia to Regional Player*. Middle East Institute., 2017.
[469] Norton, Augustus Richard. *Hezbollah: A Short History-Updated Edition*. Vol. 53. Princeton University Press, 2014.
[470]Samaan, Jean-Loup. *From war to deterrence? Israel-Hezbollah conflict since 2006*. ARMY WAR COLLEGE CARLISLE BARRACKS PA STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, 2014.

a considerable extent, not dented as Nasrallah did not spare the chance to reply to Israel's assaults at any event.

At any instance, retaliation holds and inherent risk of escalation. However, Nasrallah, through calculated responses, showed absolute commitment to deterrence rather than a desire for escalation. Thus, although the Syrian crisis entangled all the three fronts together (the Syrian, Lebanese and Israeli), the deterrence system upon which Hezbollah and Israel have settled the 2006 war remained relatively solid. At most, even when the "rules of the game" were breached, deterrence was reestablished. Thereby, until this date, in deterrence saw Hezbollah and Israel a long-term settlement amid the still-open front in Syria.

7.6 An Overall Analysis of Nasrallah's Discursive Deterrence Discourse After 2006

Nasrallah's deterrence strategy after 2006 can be divided into two categories. First, the latter's discourse after the 2006 war saw a dramatic evolution in terms of the types of threats issued. Notwithstanding that Nasrallah's love for intimidating and ridiculing Israel through denial remained prevalent, threats by punishment overwhelmingly marked Nasrallah's deterrence discursive strategies. Indeed, this deterrence maneuver, which was first used by Nasrallah during the 2006 war, was further bolstered in the period post the war.

Markedly, Nasrallah's adoption of general deterrence, and especially by punishment, was to create "dissuasion effects" to the Israelis, in an attempt to reduce the need for narrow deterrence, and thereby maintain a relative status quo where the Israelis are hesitant to engage in a large-

scale operation.[471] Really, Nasrallah used general deterrence to achieve its uttermost utility, i.e. "keeping anyone from seriously thinking about attacking", thus effectively deterring Israel.[472]

Second, Nasrallah, on the wake of the Syrian war, has had the chance to prove to Israel his party's commitment to deterrence on the lines of preserving the "rules of the game". As tensions between Israel and Hezbollah increased between 2015 and 2016 especially, Nasrallah's rhetorical and military replies to Israel's assaults contributed greatly to preserving Hezbollah's deterrence posture.

Most importantly, since the end of the war in 2006, the concept of deterrence and the idea of deterring rather than confronting Israel has been firmly proclaimed by Hezbollah's leadership. Hence, Nasrallah made of the party's renewed and ever-growing military arsenal a chiefly deterrent force against Israel.[473] In short, the following table summarizes Nasrallah's discursive deterrence pattern in the years following 2006.

Event/Time Period	Post the 2006 War and the 2008 Dahiya Doctrine	Hezbollah's Involvement in the Syrian Crisis by 2013
Nasrallah's Respective Discursive Replies	General Deterrence by Punishment	Immediate Deterrence by Punishment
Speech Excerpts	*"Even more, today, I want to tell the Israelis, not only if you hit Dahiya we will hit Tel Aviv, if you hit the Rafiq Hariri International Airport in Beirut, we will hit the Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv."*	*"We have the right to respond to the assassination in the place and time and in the way we see suitable. This is our right. I add to you tonight, we, in Hezbollah, will practice this right."*

Table 5 The Pattern of Nasrallah's Deterrence Discourse Post 2006

[471] Mazarr, Michael J. *Understanding Deterrence*. RAND, 2018.
[472] Morgan, Patrick M. *Deterrence now*. Vol. 89. Cambridge University Press, 2003.
[473] Samaan, Jean-Loup. "Missile warfare and violent non-state actors: the case of Hezbollah." *Defence studies* 17, no. 2 (2017): 156-170.

7.7 Conclusion: The Success of Nasrallah's Discourse of Deterrence by Punishment and the "Rules of the Game" After 2006

Today, Hezbollah is considered to be one of the most heavily armed nonstate actors in the world.[474] After Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian crisis and building on the skills and knowledge it gained after the 2006 war, the latter party has become more of a highly skilled and professional army rather than a small group of militant insurgents.[475] Most notably, Hezbollah's constant acquisition of transformative long range rockets has further bolstered the party's number one strategy, threatening and deterring Israel by targeting it deep in its homeland and against its civilians. Based on this strategic conviction, Nasrallah's threats of punishment have multiplied by the dawn of the 2006 war, and proceeded, with little interruption, during the war years in Syria.

Truly, Nasrallah, since 2006, has shown a strong desire to signal to Israel the high costs of any upcoming war, as well as Hezbollah's ability and intent to pursue the issued threats. By the end of the war, Nasrallah little missed the opportunity to appear on screen and communicate resolve and deterrence by punishment towards Israel. As Hezbollah's "strategic calculus", especially post the war, entailed an investment in highly predatory rockets, missiles and air defense systems,[476] its military capability, like Nasrallah's rhetoric of deterrence grew

[474] Elgindy, Mahmoud Ahmed. "Deterrence-terrorism: the use of strategic terrorism as the basis of deterrence in theory and in the case of Hezbollah-Israel, 2006-2020." PhD diss., Tartu Ülikool, 2020.
[475] Al-Aloosy, Massaab, Massaab Al-Aloosy, and Yurova. *The Changing Ideology of Hezbollah*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
[476] Samaan, Jean-Loup. *From war to deterrence? Israel-Hezbollah conflict since 2006*. ARMY WAR COLLEGE CARLISLE BARRACKS PA STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, 2014.

exponentially and directly proportionally. So, how did Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence post 2006 succeed in deterring Israel?

First, Nasrallah succeeded in communicating the deterrent value of his rockets. Put differently, while rockets, in general, lack the inherent harming psychological effect of nuclear weapons, Nasrallah was yet able to employ these conventional weapons by amplifying their damaging psychological effects on Israel, through primarily the communication of punishment and possible targets.[477] Nasrallah, by communicating the ability to carry precision strikes, was bluntly trying to create a strategic parity between essentially asymmetric actors.[478]

Second, by assuming a deterrence mindset, Nasrallah transformed Hezbollah's arsenal, especially rockets, into weapons of deterrence per se. Therefore, as Hezbollah has worked on ameliorating its rocket arsenal, it being the most threatening weapon to Israel, the latter further bolstered its deterrent posture.

Third and most importantly, Nasrallah was trusted by the Israelis. Therefore, the credibility of his threats has been acknowledged by the Israelis to a large extent. Resultantly, Nasrallah, which takes pride in his party's credibility, was able to meet the fundamental prerequisite of a successful deterrence formula, i.e. credibility. At minimum, as explained earlier, the evacuation of the ammonia tanks in 2017, shortly after Nasrallah's threats, best demonstrates Hezbollah's credibility vis a vis Israel. On these lines, Nasrallah, on August 14, 2007, had since then stressed Hezbollah's credibility by stating the following:

[477] Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to Deter: Deterrence Failure and Success in the Israel-Hezbollah Conflict, 2006–16." *International Security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-196.
[478] Elgindy, Mahmoud Ahmed. "Deterrence-terrorism: the use of strategic terrorism as the basis of deterrence in theory and in the case of Hezbollah-Israel, 2006-2020." PhD diss., Tartu Ülikool, 2020.

"Some say: you are waging psychological warfare. Indeed, that is correct. It is part of the battle. But I wage credible psychological war. I talk about facts, not lies."[479]

Actually, both Hezbollah and Israel, post 2006, understood that a next war would be devastating for both parties. Also, Hezbollah understood that absolutely winning over Israel is unrealistic and that deterrence by itself is a win.[480] Therefore, amid Hezbollah's survival before Israel and the former's recognition of the costs of war, both parties have worked on enhancing their deterrence postures.[481] Indeed, Israel saw in the Dahiya doctrine a recalibration to Israel's deterrence posture which was dented in 2006. Simultaneously, Nasrallah, through a discourse of punishment, and through calculated replies to Israel's assaults during the Syrian crisis, sought to enhance his party's deterrence posture, and thus establish a solid equation of reciprocally acknowledged deterrence.

It was through threats of punishment primarily, thanks to a heightened rocket capability, that Nasrallah, since 2006, has bolstered his party's deterrence power and reputation. Really, Nasrallah's rhetoric of deterrence by punishment has been based on a strong belief that Hezbollah's rockets are capable of damaging Israel's plans against it.[482]

However, while the essentially asymmetric military warfare between Israel and Hezbollah has been in pause for several years now, Hezbollah, by the dawn of 2020 at least, has been put

[479] Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to Deter: Deterrence Failure and Success in the Israel-Hezbollah Conflict, 2006–16." *International Security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-196.
[480] Makovsky, David, and Jeffrey White. *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizballah war: A preliminary assessment*. Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006.
[481] Al-Aloosy, Massaab, Massaab Al-Aloosy, and Yurova. *The Changing Ideology of Hezbollah*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
[482] Mohammad Salami, "Why Hasn't Israel Dared to Battle Lebanon since 2006 War with Hezbollah?: Video," July 19, 2020, http://english.almanar.com.lb/1090201.

before an unparalleled threat, i.e. the war of sanctions emanating directly from the defender, the US, rather than from the protégé itself, Israel. Nevertheless, the Gulf states' recent normalization with Israel has further demeaned the resolute of Arab governments against the latter, which has long been seen as a usurper entity. As a result, the policy of US-Israeli-Arab encirclement of Iran and Hezbollah began to put the latter in an unprecedented regional isolation in its war against Israel. Hence, will the renewed US-orchestrated strategy of encirclement be able to achieve what the direct military confrontation failed to, thus crumble deterrence and Hezbollah?

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This chapter will sum up the main findings of the thesis. As the four case study chapters have demonstrated, Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence, since 1992, has been directly proportional to the evolution of Hezbollah's military capability. The more Hezbollah acquired rocket power, starting with short-range Katyusha rockets, and reaching long-range precision-guided missiles, the magnitude of Nasrallah's discourse evolved accordingly, on the lines of punishment. Meanwhile, the "rules of the game", put in practice by 1996, have defined the deterrence comportment of both actors, especially in times of peace after 2006. In short, this chapter will first underpin the main findings of the thesis and the lessons learned from the Hezbollah-Israeli conflict. Second, it will weigh these findings against the theoretical grounds established in the literature review and the methodology chapter. Third, before summing up, the chapter proceeds by enumerating some of the limitations of this thesis and the possible contribution of future research.

8.2 Summary of Findings

On the lines of war and deterrence, the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel has proven to be a protracted one and is more likely to sustain rather than terminate in the near future. The last war, in 2006, demonstrated Israel's inability to liquidate Hezbollah. Most importantly, amid its survival, Hezbollah, over the years has demonstrated little interest in taking on Israel, and rather

focused its strategy on deterring rather than confronting the latter.[483] Therefore, two factors have contributed to the establishment of deterrence: Hezbollah's survival and the high uncertainties accompanying any future Israeli direct military operation. Indeed, Hezbollah has reasonably acknowledged its limits and saw in deterrence victory over war.[484] However, this fact in itself has made of Hezbollah a long-standing challenge to Israel over the years. Building on this, below is a summary of the main findings of every chapter.

As chapter 1 suggests, the significance of Nasrallah's discourse by 1992, upon the deployment of Katyushas, lies in the latter's adoption of the very first discourse of deterrence by punishment. As well, the acknowledgement of "rules of the game" by 1996 between both parties has proven to become the deterrence paradigm of Hezbollah and Israel until today.

The most significant finding of chapter 2 underpins how Nasrallah's abandonment of a military translatable discourse of deterrence between 2000 and 2005 weakened Hezbollah's deterrence posture greatly. Adding to geopolitical considerations, Nasrallah's loose discourse contributed greatly to the erosion of deterrence by 2006 between both parties.

In chapter 3, Nasrallah's orchestration of a bold deterrence by punishment discourse during the 2006 war, notwithstanding denial, complemented most of Hezbollah's military activities, especially rocket attacks. Most importantly, the latter's discourse has become, by 2006, and after, a main pillar to assess Hezbollah's deterrence posture and the threat of future military actions.

[483] Byman, Daniel. "Israel's Four Fronts." *Survival* 61, no. 2 (2019): 167-188.
[484] Cambanis, Thanassis. *A privilege to die: Inside Hezbollah's legions and their endless war against Israel*. Simon and Schuster, 2010.

Finally, as chapter 4 demonstrated, Nasrallah's deterrence by punishment discourse, on the lines of general deterrence, unprecedently bolstered Hezbollah's deterrence posture. In great part to Hezbollah's heightened military capabilities and Nasrallah's deterrence discourse, more than thirteen years of deterrence stability have prevailed.

In short, as the analysis throughout the case study chapters suggests, Nasrallah's rhetoric of deterrence fluctuated essentially between denial and punishment, on the lines of either immediate, narrow or general deterrence. Nevertheless, Nasrallah little missed the opportunity to address the US, which has always orchestrated a war against Hezbollah, especially between 2000 and 2005, on the lines of extended deterrence. However, most importantly, the discursive deterrence pattern which Nasrallah has created over the years suggests the following.

First and foremost, deterrence by punishment has always been tied to Hezbollah's rocket capability and its development over the years. Indeed, with Nasrallah's employment of deterrence by punishment, first by 1992, and then by 2006, and after, the latter broadcasted a deep commitment to deterrence over war. Nevertheless, with Hezbollah's transformative military capabilities, Nasrallah's threats of punishment turned, after 2006, unprecedently targeted and precise. At minimum, credible threats by punishment have considerably contributed to deter war.

Second, deterrence by denial has always been, since Nasrallah's earliest speeches and until present, the glue for the latter's discourses. Indeed, never did Nasrallah abandon expressions of denial and intimidation in his discourse, even after 2006, when he scored high on deterrence by punishment. In reality, Nasrallah has always employed his psychological war of denial to

demonstrate invincibility and assured victory for Hezbollah.[485] Thus, as denial sustained throughout Nasrallah's speeches, it created, over the years, the ambiance of victory for Hezbollah and the psychological war against Israel.

8.3 Lessons Learned

Until today, Hezbollah has provided scholars of international relations with a robust example of successful and long-term asymmetric deterrence. Out of the many nonstate actors in the Middle East, as depicted in Chapter 2, Hezbollah remains the fittest politically, socially, organizationally and most importantly, on the military and communicatory levels. While many failed at significantly deterring Israel's military supremacy, like Hamas and Fateh, Hezbollah brings to struggling nonstate actors the following deterrence lessons to be learned.

As Freedman puts, deterrence is both a "strategic option" and a "state of mind".[486] Hezbollah, indeed, achieved success on both of deterrence's layers. First, as a strategic option, Hezbollah's acquisition of transformational rocket power since 1992 has given the latter the privilege to hurt, thus deter, all out wars since 2006.

Second, as a state of mind, the idea of Hezbollah's growing military capability, enshrined in Hezbollah's discursive deterrence strategies, through punishment primarily has created a robust reputational image of the party. Hence, the principal purpose of the acquisition of rocket power, i.e. deterrence, was achieved.

[485] Abu-Lughod, Reem, and Samuel Warkentin. "Understanding Political Influence in Modern-Era Conflict: A Qualitative Historical Analysis of Hassan Nasrallah's Speeches." *Journal of Terrorism Research* (2012).
[486] Freedman, Lawrence. *Deterrence*. Polity, 2004.

At minimum, Hezbollah's ability to considerably fulfill the strategic and psychological edges of deterrence triumphed it over war. Markedly, these achievements have made of Hezbollah "Israel's deadliest foe".[487] Hence, out of Israel's many fronts, Hezbollah has become Israel's uttermost strategic challenge in the region.

As explained in the section below, the case of successful asymmetric deterrence between Hezbollah and Israel illustrates to scholars of deterrence how the weaker actors can bridge the normative and military gaps. Markedly, the case of deterrence between Hezbollah and Israel remains a unique experience for asymmetric actors in the Middle East and the world.

8.4 Assessing the Theoretical Grounds

After looking at Hezbollah's twin and parallel evolutions: military capability and discourse, reassessing the role of communication, as presented in the literature review, and its efficacy between essentially asymmetric actors, is central. In this vein, Adler has argued that nonstate actors and state actors communicate via different channels, thus disrupting the message.[488] In the case of Hezbollah and Israel, Nasrallah's messages were only best comprehended by Israel when the latter's rhetoric evolved to embrace general deterrence by punishment, especially in times of relative peace, such as after 2006. Thus, through the promises of precision strikes, and after a 34 days battleground experience, a common understanding of symbols and targets, although rarely shared and hard to achieve as per Jervis, Lebow and Stein,[489] has been established between both adversaries. Hence, Nasrallah bolstered deterrence greatly.

[487] Byman, Daniel. "Israel's Four Fronts." *Survival* 61, no. 2 (2019): 167-188.
[488] Paul, Thazha V., Patrick M. Morgan, and James J. Wirtz, eds. *Complex deterrence: Strategy in the global age*. University of Chicago Press, 2009.
[489] Jervis, Robert, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein. *Psychology and deterrence*. JHU Press, 1989.

However, inexorably, "everyone has an incentive to talk tough."[490] To build a credible reputation of oneself, whether a state or a non-state actor, Nalebuff argues about an overlap between "will" and "commitment".[491] On these lines, Nasrallah, whose tough rhetoric has become well-targeted over time, due to military sufficiency, and Israeli acknowledgment, created a credible and justified reputational image of Hezbollah's capabilities. Indeed, during the 2006 war, the threats issued by Nasrallah have been executed and damaging enough. Thus, the threats issued post-2006 gained considerable credibility. Today, Nasrallah keeps his promises probably more than ever. For instance, on November 10, 2018, he expressed unconditioned commitment to rocket deterrence and resistance. On these lines, he stated the following:

"If we have to sell our homes to protect these rocket capabilities in the hands of the resistance, we will do that."[492]

Building on the commitment which Nasrallah expressed, the nucleus of Hezbollah's strategy has become to deter rather than going to war. Paradoxically, although both parties in combat are asymmetrically deterring in conventional theory, "if the weaker actor can impose its preferences on the stronger actor, the relationship becomes essentially symmetrical".[493] As deterrence has fed Hezbollah's survival but has hunted Israel's security, the former transformed the battle from asymmetrical to symmetrical. Markedly, Hezbollah created a deterrence trap for Israel which its

[490] Nalebuff, Barry. "Rational deterrence in an imperfect world." *World Politics* 43, no. 3 (1991): 313-335.
[491] Nalebuff, 315.
[492] TOI Staff, "Nasrallah promises 'definite response' to any Israeli strike in Lebanon." The Times of Israel, November 10, 2018. https://www.timesofisrael.com/nasrallah-warns-of-definite-response-to-any-israeli-strike-in-lebanon/
[493] Sobelman, Daniel. "Learning to Deter: Deterrence Failure and Success in the Israel-Hezbollah Conflict, 2006–16." *International Security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 151-196.

exit is costly and inconclusive. As deterrence is a lesson acquired over time, Hezbollah and Israel have become better at deterring than at going to war.

In short, the case of the Hezbollah-Israeli conflict has demonstrated the viability of asymmetric deterrence. As evident until now, none is willing to quit deterrence. Indeed, both parties have absorbed the repercussions of the war in Syria and have relatively abided to the "rules of the game". At minimum, Israel, like Hezbollah, believe that deterrence remains "the best outcome of their competition", especially that war cannot yield absolutely conclusive or satisfactory results for either parties.[494]

8.5 Limitations of the Thesis

Although the thesis significantly contributes to understanding the comportment of the nonstate actor in deterrence, amid little literature on this viewpoint per se, I state the following limitations of the research. First, the thesis does not investigate the Israeli point of view to the development of Hezbollah's military capability or arsenal. Instead, it solely focuses on Hezbollah's behavior with little reference to Israel's deterrent responses.

Second, Hezbollah's national and transnational alliances, which are of great effect to Hezbollah's deterrence posture, are not fully explored in the thesis. Thus, while the thesis assesses the direct results of these alliances (e.g. the acquisition of state-of-the art rockets), it does not show how or why Hezbollah's partners have contributed in bolstering its power.

[494] Samaan, Jean-Loup. *From war to deterrence? Israel-Hezbollah conflict since 2006*. ARMY WAR COLLEGE CARLISLE BARRACKS PA STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, 2014.

Third, unaddressed recent events, like the October 17 revolution in Lebanon, followed by the August 4 explosion in the Beirut Port, and the very first border disputes negotiations between Lebanon and Israel, have had detrimental impacts on the future of the Lebanese political system, thus Hezbollah. Together, these events have added a burden to Hezbollah's deterrence strategies.

8.6 The Possible Contribution of Future Research

Building on the findings provided by the thesis and its limitations, future work can further focus of the following main points. First, the Hezbollah-Israeli case of deterrence provides an insightful experience for research pertaining to asymmetric deterrence. Therefore, future works, through a comparative approach, may compare between Hezbollah and other nonstate actors in the region to understand better how the former, unlike other groups, was able to establish deterrence over time.

Second, future research can undergo an in-depth understanding of the geopolitical environment engulfing the Hezbollah-Israeli relationship of deterrence. While this thesis analyzes the results of the political and military dynamics vis a vis deterrence, research in the future can provide a more robust understanding of Hezbollah's national and transnational alliances, their dynamics and repercussions on deterrence, especially after the latest developments (e.g. the October 17 revolution and the August 4 Beirut Explosion). Nevertheless, future research shall focus on the political, military and deterrence repercussions of Hezbollah's direct military involvement in the Syrian war and the survival of the Assad regime, without which Hezbollah's lifeline between Iran and Lebanon would have been jeopardized greatly.

8.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, Hezbollah and Israel have exemplified successful deterrence between uneven actors in the field of international relations and security studies. Markedly, a considerable contributor the establishment of deterrence by Hezbollah has been Nasrallah's discourse of deterrence. Today, in a globalized world governed by conflicting strategic interests, the Hezbollah-Israeli conflict mirrors best how deterrence can substitute war. However, the overall scholarship on deterrence has little focused on asymmetric deterrence and has rather been skeptical about its sustainability. It saw impediments rather than opportunities for its establishment. Therefore, the literature on deterrence shall take the Hezbollah-Israeli case as a successful example against the odds of asymmetric deterrence amid the perils of neighboring military struggles, as in Syria. Nevertheless, if a war erupts between Hezbollah and Israel in the future, the outcome remains uncertain. If no party wins decisively, as in 2006, deterrence will prevail again. Therefore, the deterrence paradigm between Hezbollah and Israel is best understood in the absence of war.

Yet, till what end will deterrence hold between asymmetric actors like Hezbollah and Israel? Will deterrence sustain after Hezbollah's retreat from Syria? Conversely, will a political settlement bring Hezbollah, or its patrons, dented by the recent US sanctions, to the table of negotiations with Israel? The scholarship has yet to answer these questions.

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