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Hezbollah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - a comparative study

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1. Introduction

Following the independence of Israel in 1948, the Israeli government and the Palestinians have been locked in a 60-year conflict. Despite Israel being outnumbered by hostile neighboring countries that support the Palestinians, the Jewish nation has consistently emerged victorious after every war with the Palestinians and their Arab neighbors. The Palestinians after each war with Israel would see their land disappear and many Palestinians became refugees.¹ While the previous wars have been defined by Arab and Israeli armies fighting on a traditional battlefield, today the situation is much different. The constant defeat of Arab nations and the subsequent peace agreement between them and Israel, has led to Palestinian having to fight Israel on their own. This ultimately led to the conflict being fought between Israel and Palestinian armed groups also known as non-state actors.²

Secular Palestinian groups initially dominated the Palestinian national movement but started to lose their dominance on the Palestinian national movement, Islamic groups like Hamas Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Lebanese Hezbollah became stronger and more popular than the secular groups and, in the end, filled in the gap left by the secular groups.³ While most journalist and political analysts associate the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with Islamist groups because of their prevalence today, it is important to note that secular groups have existed and still exists today. Therefore, it is also important to explore the differences and similarities between the two camps.

The Subject of this thesis is two of the militant groups still fighting against Israel; the Marxist-Leninist Popular Front for Liberation (PFLP) and the Lebanese Shia Islamist group Hezbollah. The PFLP established in 60's and is still active despite losing much of its strength and influence, Hezbollah on the other hand was founded in the 80's Hezbollah since its establishment have grown in strength, size, and popularity. Hezbollah despite being a Lebanese organization have made the liberation of Palestine and the destruction of Israel their main goal.

¹ Brian Murphy. Adam Taylor, "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict A Timeline," *The Washington Post* May, 20, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/05/13/israel-palestinians-timeline-conflict/>. Accessed November 8, 2021.

² Jeremy Bowen, "1967 War: Six Days That Changed The Middle East," *BBC* June.5.2017 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39960461> Accessed November 8, 2021.

³ Hussein Agha. Ahmad Samih Khalidi, "The End of This Road: The Decline of the Palestinian National Movement" *The New Yorker* August. 6.2017.

1.2 Research Question

The Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) is a Palestinian Marxist-Leninist organization founded in 1969 by a coalition of several other leftist Palestinian groups.⁴ Since 1969 the PFLP has represented a hard-liner leftist trend within the Palestinian national movement. The organization has also embarked on an international terrorism campaign,⁵ they have a long history of fighting both Israel and Arab governments, they also fought in the Jordanian and Lebanese Civil War. However, The Organization faced a significant decline in the mid-1980s and today is overshadowed by other Palestinian and non- Palestinian Islamist groups.

The Hezbollah is a Lebanese Shia Islamist terrorist and political party established after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.⁶ Its members also fought in the Lebanese civil war and 1991-2000 in a guerrilla campaign against Israeli occupation of South Lebanon,⁷ and another war with Israel in 2006. Today Hezbollah is involved in the Syrian Civil War, helping the Syrian government maintain its power in Syria. Apart from their military activity Hezbollah is a political party in Lebanon running in Lebanese election and cooperating with other political parties.

While both Hezbollah and PFLP fight against Israel and regularly use terrorism tactics against this foe, they follow wildly different ideologies. Hezbollah follows a Shia Islamist ideology and the PFLP follow a Marxist-Leninist ideology. This brings us to the question:

What are the main differences and similarities between a Islamist terrorist group and a Marxist-Leninist terrorist group? And more importantly how has their respective ideologies influenced and shaped these two groups.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the history of PFLP and Hezbollah and compare both groups which will include a comparison of their history, ideology, organizational and military structure. The purpose of this comparison is to explore if these two groups follow a similar

⁴ As'ad AbuKhalil, 'George Habash and the Movement of Arab Nationalists: Neither Unity nor Liberation' *Journal of Palestine studies* 28, No. 4 (1999): 99

⁵ Yoram Schweitzer, "Innovation in Terrorist Organizations The Case of PFLP and its Offshoots" *Strategic Insight* 10, nr 2 (2011): 17

⁶ Thomas Hegghammer, *Islamsk Terrorisme* (Oslo: Abstrakt foralg,2005), 31

⁷ Hilde Henriksen Waage *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* (Oslo: Cappelen damm akademisk, 2013), 245

pattern. Another aim of this thesis is to explore which factors led to Hezbollah becoming a dominant party while PFLP losing much of strength and ultimately becoming a small faction within the Palestinian national movement.

1.3 Method

The comparative method is a historical analysis that entail comparing two historical events, societies or in this case organizations. The purpose of making a comparative study is not to simply compare two phenomena for the sake of comparison but rather to use the information to attempt to explain the phenomenon by comparing the differences and the similarities.⁸ This analysis will be a comparison of two organizations with the aims of explaining the phenomenon of violent non-state actors in the middle east.

John Stuart Mill (1836-1873) developed his own comparative method.⁹ Mill's method is to identify which variable that led to a common outcome in the case of method of similarity and which variable led to a different outcome in the case of method of difference.¹⁰

Marc Bloch (1886- 1944) the French historian was also a major contributor to comparative history. He believed that the field of History was important in order explain the nature of humankind in life and the best way to approach this was to compare societies with each other. Bloch believed that in order to explain a historical process one should compare it to other similar process across time and space. Bloch used logic to explain French feudalism by comparing with other agrarian societies. What sets Bloch apart from other comparative researchers is that he uses the method not only to answer question about a phenomenon but to formulate the questions themselves.¹¹

The historian Stefan Berger distinguishes between two types of comparative history, namely on individualizing and one universalizing. The first mentioned seeks to highlight its uniqueness of one phenomenon by comparing it with other similar phenomenon, while the aforementioned seeks to highlight the similarities between all of them. Berger further adds one subcategory to each category making total of four types of comparison. The first subcategory of individualizing is encompassing comparison, which seeks to explain

⁸ Svein Atle Skålevåg, Teemu Ryymin Et Al, *Å gripe fortida* (Oslo: Samlaget, 2015), 102

⁹ John Stuart Mill *System of Logic* (London: Charles River Editors 1843)

¹⁰ Svein Atle Skålevåg and Teemu Ryymin Et Al, *Å gripe fortida*, 104

¹¹ Hopcroft, Rosemary "Marc Bloch and the value of Comparative and Historical Research" *newsletter of comparative & historical sociology* vol 5 nr 3 (1993), 1-3

difference between phenomenon which share a commonality. The second one which is related to universalizing variation finding looks at different cases as a variation of a phenomenon.¹²

This analysis will follow a method similar to an encompassing comparison. With the overall commonality being that they both are radical non-state actors fighting in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Analyzing the differences between Hezbollah and PFLP will hopefully lead us to the answers on why Hezbollah was able to grow while PFLP lost much of its power. This thesis explores what Hezbollah did differently than PFLP and if these differences were a significant factor, as well as explores how these two organizations differ from each other. Such differences as from how they have structured their organization including chain of command, their military activities, how each of them use propaganda as a tool and their ideologies. We will also compare history of both since this will give us insight into how both respond to similar events. It is also the goal of this thesis to see if there are any common patterns that non-state actors follow despite having been completely different.

This thesis is structured in the following way. Part 1: an introduction to PFLP and Hezbollah history. The reason for dedicating a part of this analysis for a historical rundown is to give the reader a better understanding of the historical context behind the analyses. Additionally, having a separate part just for history removes the need to dedicate a large part of the comparative analysis to give historical background information as the reader would already know. Part 2: a comparative analysis of both groups. Part 3: comparative analysis of the structures of both organizations. Part 4: conclusion.

There is also an issue that needs to be addressed both time aspect and geographical factors overlap. However, as PFLP and Hezbollah are two completely different organizations composed of different nationalities following different ideologies and therefore are separate social movements, with that in mind these overlaps should not be an issue.

1.4 Concepts

There are several terms and concepts that are central to understanding PFLP and Hezbollah. Before we move on to the next part these terms need to be clearly defined in order to have a clear understanding of what they entail in the context of this thesis. The list is in alphabetical order.

¹² Stefan Berger Comparative History in *Writing History* edited by Heiko Feldner and Kevin Passmore (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 189

Pan-Arabism: also known as Arab nationalism, is the idea that the Arab people should unite under their Arab identity and that the Arab nations should be independent from outside influences. This ideology became popular in the 18th century by Arabs who were working as ottoman administrators and had studied in the West.¹³ Early Arab Nationalist were mainly concerned with expelling the Ottomans from the middle east. This resulted in Arab nationalist working with Britain to rebel against Ottoman rule.¹⁴ Pan -Arabism is a central part of the ideology of many Arab organizations including leftist fractions, including PFLP.

Political Islam: is synonyms with Islamic fundamentalism. It is the idea that Muslims have to be governed by an Islamic government under Sharia law as an alternative to western cultural and political hegemony. While most associate political Islam with violent terrorist groups that is not always the case. It is important to distinguish between political Islamist groups that uses peaceful mean to achieve their goal and violent Islamist groups.¹⁵ Naturally Hezbollah falls into the latter category.

State sponsored terrorism: is when a state supports and sponsors a terrorist group or commits acts of terror.¹⁶ A clear example of state sponsored terrorism would be Hezbollah and Iran. The country provides funding, military aid, and ideological support to Hezbollah to the extent that Hezbollah have been called a proxy group to Iran.¹⁷

Terrorism: As both groups fall under the term terrorist group therefore this term needs to be clearly defined. There are a wide variety of opinions on the definition of terrorism since states are generally more willing to label a guerrilla group as a terrorist group or terrorist groups to lapel themselves as “freedom fighters”. Professor Bjørn Erik Rash in his book “Islamisk terrorisme” defines terrorism as a strategy where violence is directed towards civilians by non-state actors or state actors. Gus Martin also defines terrorism as Political motivated violence usually directed at civilian targets with the intention to terrorize target audience.¹⁸

Wilayat al faqih: Theocratic system of government where an ayatollah (Islamic Jurist who have achieved the highest possible degree in Islamic law) is voted by the Ulemma (Muslim jurists) to have the authority over decision making in the government. This means that every

¹³ Harlod M. Cubert *The PFLP's Changing Role in the Middle East* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1997), 17

¹⁴ Waage *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* 63

¹⁵ Kari Vogt *Islam - tradisjon, fundamentalisme og reform* (Oslo: Cappelen 2005) 56

¹⁶ Gus Martin *Understanding Terrorism: Challenges, Perspectives, and Issues* (Thousand Oaks: sage publications , 2003), 84

¹⁷ Waage *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* (2013) 246

¹⁸ Bjørn Erik Rasch *Islamistisk terrorisme* (Oslo: Abstrakt forlag, 2005) 11

decision that a state makes must be approved by the leading Islamic jurist the ayatollah. This idea was developed by Iranian ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini while in exile in Iraq following the Iranian revolution in 1979. Wilayat al Faqih was implemented in Iran and still practiced to this day.¹⁹

1.5 Sources on PFLP

First hands sources on PFLP are vast, associates and supporters of the organization maintain a comprehensive online archive available through pflp-documents.org. The archives include issues from their magazine the PFLP Bulletin that ran from 1974 until 1982. These magazine gives a great insight into their operations that makes it possible to see their side of the story instead of relying on other outside sources. The Bulletin also includes thought and essays from many PFLP writers giving us invaluable sources on the organization's history. Books written by central PFLP members such as Ghassan Kanafani the organization's spokesman, are available from the PFLP archive. Apart from the online archive there is also a comprehensive archive of intelligence report on the organization's activities.

Sources outside of the PFLP's own archives includes CIA archives made available through the freedom of information act. These reports much like reports on Hezbollah includes vital information on PFLP activities and their relationship with other PLO faction. These reports are vital first-hand account on the organizations. While PFLP own archives might give a much more one-sided view of their history the other archives give us a more nuanced view

1.6 Sources on Hezbollah

Most of the information on Hezbollah is shrouded in secrecy which makes gathering first-hand sources difficult as there is no archive for Hezbollah or any of their associated organizations that is accessible or open to the public. Nevertheless, there is a handful of online archives containing Hezbollah leaders and members conducting interviews and there are some documents released from Hezbollah and other government sources that will be useful in this thesis.

The first official document released by the Hezbollah is the 1985 manifesto called open letter from Hezbollah to the downtrodden of Lebanon. This document seeks to clarify their goals and the group's worldview. The 1985 document have heavy religious overtones it opens with

¹⁹ Noof Rashid ALDOSARI *Between the Supreme Leader and the President: Understanding Wilayat al Faqih (Iranian) System of Governance*, World Journal of Social Science Research issue 6 no 3 (September 2018), 389

a verse from the Quran “And whoever is an ally of Allah and His Messenger and those who have believed - indeed, the party of Allah - they will be the triumphed”. The document praises the Islamic revolution in Iran and claims that it is part of one Islamic ummah (a Muslim society). Liberation of the oppressed is also a central theme of this document - with the oppressed they mean the Muslims around the world.²⁰

The second document released by the Hezbollah was a new manifesto released to the public in 2009. In this document, the religious rhetoric has been significantly reduced. The central part of this document is that fighting American hegemony also supporting the Lebanese political system by working with it and participating in elections this is a clear difference from the more radical 1985 document and marks the shifting ideology of Hezbollah.²¹

Hezbollah members do occasionally give interviews, specially their leader Hassan Nasrallah who has been serving as the group’s general secretary since 1992. Abbas al-Musawi, Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah (spiritual leader) have also given some interviews.

One of the more significant interviews given by Nasrallah is to an Iranian website, it spans for five hours and talks about the relationship between Hezbollah and Iran, the war against Israel, USA, and Saudi Arabia conflict.²² This interview also gives us important information of the establishment of Hezbollah in the early 80’s. Another important first hand source is Hezbollah’s deputy leader Naim Qassem’s book “Hezbollah: The Story From Within” a valuable insider view on the history of Hezbollah.

²⁰ ‘Open Lette from Hezbollah to the downtrodden in Lebanon and the World, 1985 Accessed November 4, 2021. https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000361273.pdf

²¹ *The new Hezbollah manifesto 2009* <http://www.lebanonrenaissance.org/assets/Uploads/15-The-New-Hezbollah-Manifesto-Nov09.pdf>

²² <https://english.khamenei.ir/news/7075/The-full-text-of-Khamenei-ir-s-interview-with-Sayyid-Hassan-Nasrallah>

1.7 Histography

The Palestinian conflict have drawn the attention of many historians, but little amount of this research has been focused on PFLP or Palestinian leftist factions, despite Palestinian leftist's significant contribution to the Palestinian cause. Most research has been focused on the much bigger Fatah or the various Islamist groups such as Hamas.²³ Research that have been found on the PLFP, and the Palestinian left have been focused on answering one question; why did the Palestinian leftist movements popularity decline so significantly in the 80's and onward?

Asad Abukahlil, a political science professor at the California State University, specializes in middle east affairs and have provided some great research on PFLP and its predecessor Arab Nationalist Movement.²⁴ Abukahalil works on the PFLP shed light on PFLP internal decision-making process and the internal working of the PFLP higherups.

Harold M. Cubert was one of the first historians to present PFLP history in book called "PFLP's Changing Role in the Middle East", Cubert view of the PFLP is that it's a violent Marxist terrorist group who are uncompromising and inflexible in implementing their goals which led to their marginalization in the 80's and early 90's.²⁵

Franseco Leopardi sheds some new light on the PFLP, in contrast with Cubert's perspective on PFLP, Leopardi's view is that PFLP was much more flexible and moderate. According to Leopardi PFLP became integrated in the PLO and only offered symbolic resistance against Fatah and Arafat. Leopardi and Abdulkhalil share the same view that PFLP often changed their politics in accordance with geopolitical and internal developments.²⁶

Unlike PFLP the subject of Hezbollah has been thoroughly studied by historians and social scientist. Many researchers on Hezbollah focus on different aspects of the organization rather than the organizations history. There is also a wide variety on how Hezbollah history is presented and some discrepancy on the information provided by the researchers depending on what sources is available to the researcher. An example of this is the organizations establishment; there is no certain information on how Hezbollah was established. Researchers offer different views on how Hezbollah was first established. Also depending on what aspect

²³ Francesco Saverio Leopardi, *the Palestinian left and its decline Loyal Opposition* (Palgrave Macmillan London 2020), 3

²⁴ Asad Abukhalil "George Habash and the Movement of Arab Nationalists: Neither Unity nor Liberation"

²⁵ Rex Brynen "The PFLP's Changing Role in the Middle East" review of *The PFLP's Changing Role in the Middle East* by Harold M Cupert *Middle East Journal*; Washington Vol. 53, Iss. 2, (Spring 1999): 304.

²⁶ Abdalhadi Alijla "Leopardi, The Palestinian Left and its Decline: Loyal Opposition" Review, *The Palestinian Left and its Decline: Loyal Opposition* by Francesco Saverio Leopardi. *Institute Of Palestinian studies Issue 125 Winter 2021*

the researcher wants explore or focus on, the information in the research presented can greatly explain one aspect while neglecting other aspects, such as Hezbollah military activities or international activities. In some books on Hezbollah that focuses on Hezbollah socio-political aspects the military and international activities are scarcely mentioned. The most renowned researcher within Hezbollah is Richard Norton, Mathew Levitt, Joseph Daher, Joseph Alagha, Auriele Daher and Dominique Avon.

Hala Jaber is a British Lebanese journalist who released her first book on Hezbollah in 1997 called “Hezbollah: Born With A Vengeance” which details the organization rise from a fringe Shiite Islamist group to a popular political party and their role within the Lebanese government.²⁷

Dr Matthew Levitt is the director for the Stein program on counterterrorism and intelligence. Dr. Levitt is well versed on terrorism and terrorist groups. His research on Hezbollah includes the book “Hezbollah: the global footprint of Lebanon’s party of god” which explores the groups international exploits and connections. This book will also clarify the groups relationship with Iran and other Shiite militant groups which is a subject that is often very unclear and subject to much speculation.²⁸

Joseph Daher on the other hand does not view Hezbollah as terrorist group and his research is centred on Hezbollah socio-political role within Lebanon. What Daher research highlights is the how Hezbollah have transformed from a party for the mainly poor Shiites to the upper-class Shiite Muslims and therefore the party transformed from representing the downtrodden radical Shiites clerics to the upper-class Shiites.²⁹ Few researchers have this amount of focus on Hezbollah political movement inside of Lebanon rather than Hezbollah-Israeli conflict.

Joseph Alagha is another academic that also focuses his works on Hezbollah political party. His research focuses on Hezbollah identity and ideology and how Hezbollah identity have changed since their establishment in the 80’s. In addition Alagha released two books with translated Hezbollah documents and speeches. Alagha along with Daher belong to the

²⁷ Rula Jurdi Abisaab “Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance” review of Hezbollah: Born With a vengeance by Hala Jaber. *The Muslim World*; Hartford Vol. 89, Iss. 2, (Apr 1999): 193-194

²⁸ Joshua Sinai “Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon’s Party of God” review of Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon’s Party of God by Mathew Levitt. *Perspectives on Terrorism* Vol. 7, No. 5 (October 2013). 144-146

²⁹ Hilal Khashan “ Hezbollah: The Political Economy of Lebanon's Party of God” by Joseph Daher *Middle East Quarterly*; Vol. 24, Iss. 3, (Summer 2017): 2-3

group of middle east researchers that presents Hezbollah as an evolving organization rather than just as Islamist terrorist group.³⁰

Richard Norton is perhaps most renowned academic on Hezbollah, many other academic rely on information provided by his book, Hezbollah a short history originally released in 2007 and continuously updated up until 2014. This book is a detailed summary on the History of Hezbollah and the information from this book builds on primary sources. Norton presentation of Hezbollah is not just that it's terrorist group but rather a political, social service provider and a military force.³¹

Dominique Avon, a professor at the University of Maine, together with Anaïs-Trissa Khatchadourian released an updated rundown of Hezbollah's history in "Hezbollah A History of the Party of God" released in 2012. In this book, the authors attempt to explain the dilemmas facing Hezbollah on how Hezbollah manages to keep their Islamic character while at the same time participating in Lebanese secular government.³²

The latest addition to Hezbollah research is "Hezbollah: Mobilization and Power" by Auriele Daher. Daher presents Hezbollah in a more sympathetic view than most other authors. She also deals with Hezbollah Leader charismatic appeal, but her research main point is to explore how Hezbollah mobilizes the Shiite population in Lebanon.³³

³⁰ Ousmane Kane "The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology and Political Program" by Joseph Alagha Arab Studies Quarterly Vol. 30, No. 2 (Spring 2008), 68-70,

³¹ Joseph Alagha "Hezbollah: A Short History" by Richard Norton. Insight Turkey Vol. 12, No. 1, 256-258.

³² Joseph Alagha "Hezbollah: A History of the "Party of God" by Dominique Avon and Anaïs-Trissa Khatchadourian Journal of Church and State, Volume 56, Issue 1, Winter 2014, Pages 166–167.

³³ John Waterbury " Hezbollah: Mobilization and Power" by Auriele Daher Foreign Affairs; New York Vol. 98, Iss. 6.

2. PFLP's predecessor: the Arab Nationalist movement

Following the disastrous 1948 war with Israel, the Palestinians who fled the fighting in the previous war lived as refugees inside of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt. There, Palestinians started to organize their own movement to fight along Arab armies in an eventual war of liberation against Israel.³⁴ One of these new Palestinian movements was the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) which later along with other groups would form Popular front for liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

ANM traces its roots back to the American university of Beirut. George Habash and Hani Al-Hindi along with Wadi Hadad founded this group primarily as an Arab nationalist organization where liberation of Palestine would be achieved by freeing the Arab states from colonial control which was a similar view held by the successor organization PFLP. However, ANM was in no way a communist or socialist group yet. According to Hadad they did not adopt a Marxist ideology because of the Soviet Union's support for the partition of Palestine.³⁵ ANM leadership traveled to Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt to establish ANM chapters there.³⁶

ANM initially faced difficulties attracting new members since many Palestinians were more inclined to join the socialist Baath party. Additionally, some ANM members also became disillusioned by ANM lack of action against Israel. Many Palestinians were more willing to join Fatah instead, since Fatah already started taking militant action against Israel. Unlike ANM Fatah policy was centered around fighting Israel before any unification of Arab states.³⁷ To quell the disillusionment of ANM members the leadership formed the "Palestine region of ANM". Their primary objective was intelligence gathering inside Israel and Palestinian territories

However, their luck would change after Nasser who had recently taken power in Egypt. ANM leadership were impressed by Nasser anti-western stance and Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal. ANM and Nasser developed a partnership where Nasser provided them with weapons and training in turn they came more under the control of Nasser. This relationship

³⁴ Yezid Sayig "Reconstructing the Paradox, the Arab Nationalist Movement, Armed Struggle, and Palestine 1951-1966" *Middle East Journal* Vol. 45, No. 4 (Autumn, 1991), 608-629, 609.

³⁵ George Habash «Taking Stock. An Interview with George Habash» interview by Dr. Mouhammed Soueid *Journal of Palestine studies* Vol. 28, No. 1 (Autumn, 1998), 86-101.

³⁶ Saying "Reconstructing the Paradox," 612.

³⁷ Ibid 610

deepened when Egypt and Syria formed the United Arab Republic. UAR was according to the Arab nationalists the first step towards a unifying the Arabs and liberating Palestine.

The first set back faced by ANM was the crushing defeat inflicted on the Arab coalition at the hands of Israel during the six days war in 1967. The defeat led to Palestinian abandoning the hope that Arab states would ever be able to defeat Israel. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) abandoned their cooperation with other Arab states. Instead they became an independent organization in which the destruction of Israel would come through violent Palestinian action. The 1967 defeat also solidified Fatah view that Palestinians have the right to fight against Israel independently from the Arab states.³⁸

This event also led to ANM breaking away from Egypt's influence. The leadership of ANM met in Damascus almost immediately after the war. During the meeting the defeated Arab countries were heavily criticized by the organization's leadership, the defeat proved to Habash and other Palestinian Arab nationalists that Palestinian liberation could not be achieved by Arab nations but only through the efforts of the Palestinians themselves. ANM dissolved following the war and George Habash created the Socialist Arab Action Party which adopted the leftist narrative while still retaining the Arab nationalist sentiment.

The Socialist Arab Action Party, along with Avenging Youth, a Leninist Marxist group, Heroes of Return (ANM Palestinian branch) and Palestine Liberation Front led by Ahmed Jibril joined forces and created The Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine.³⁹ PFLP did not adopt a Marxist-Leninist position outright. According to Habash it was not the right time to adopt Marxist Leninist principles, the basis for formation of the PFLP was that all these organization were in an alliance and not as one unified group⁴⁰

The PFLP founding statement released on 11 December 1967 reads:

“It is necessary to recruit the popular masses and mobilize them as active participants and leaders, something that can only be achieved through systematic organization addressing the armed struggle of the forces of the masses, creating a heightened awareness of the full dimensions of the battle and the stages, and continuous recruitment of manpower for the armed organization, building he revolutionary leadership in order to become more able to exercise resistance and continue despite all

³⁸ As'ad AbuKhalil “George Habash and the Movement of Arab Nationalists: Neither Unity nor Liberation” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4, (1993), 103-99.

³⁹ Ibid 100

⁴⁰ George Hajjar «Kanafi Sympol of Palestine» George Hajjar (Bekka: July 1974) 134-135

the difficulties and obstacles. Therefore, in order to unite the forces and energies of the Palestinian masses in the occupied land, we have held a full meeting between the following Palestinian organizations: The Heroes of the Return, the Palestinian Liberation Front squads (Organization of martyr Abdul Latif Shrouf – Organization of the martyr Qassam – Organization of the martyr Abdul-Qader Al-Husseini), the National Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Youth Organization for Vengeance), and several other Palestinian groups on the homeland. These organizations have agreed among themselves to unite under the banner of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, achieving a fateful unity among these forces, realizing that the nature and dimensions of the battle and the hostile forces requires us to cluster all efforts and revolutionary ranks for our long and bitter struggle against our enemies”⁴¹

George Habash was chosen to lead this new organization. PFLP adopted a clear left-wing ideology while still retaining an Arab nationalist sentiment. In their founding statement they refer to the Arab people and the Arab nations to resist imperialism and to support the Palestinian struggle, it also warns them not to collaborate with “the imperialist” and that even though it’s a revolutionary group it’s open to all other Palestinian groups to work together and form a national unity.

The establishment of the PFLP resembles Hezbollah’s establishment in a few ways. Both organizations were rooted in anti-western and Zionist sentiment, and both rose out of other organizations. In the case of PFLP it was the Arab Nationalist movement where the leaders of this organization abandoned ANM in favor of a new one with different ideology due to the failings of Arab Nationalism ideology. While Hezbollah which we will discuss later mainly made up of defector from Amal. Furthermore, Hezbollah in their early years and throughout their history were relatively free from internal strife and defection this was not the case for PFLP.

In 1968 PFLP became a member in the Fatah dominated PLO which led to rivalry between PFLP and Fatah. Fatah had already established itself as the dominant Palestinian resistance group after the battle of Kamarah in 1968. This was a great disadvantage to PFLP. They also suffered from several splits, in 1968 Ahmed Jibril, a founding member, broke away and formed a new group. PFLP- general command, Jibril reasoning for forming his own faction

⁴¹ Founding document of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – December, 11 1967
<http://pflp-documents.org/founding-statement-of-the-popular-front-for-the-liberation-of-palestine-english/>

was that they should cooperate with Jordan and Syria. Jibril's faction was an important one since his group was made up by experienced former military officers and soldiers.⁴²

The same year PFLP suffered another split by Nayef Hawatmeh and his followers who made up a significant number of intellectuals. They attempted a coup after Habash was imprisoned in Syria. As a result of the split, they had lost an important part of its intellectual circle, their voice to the masses and the newspaper Al-Hourriah - meaning the discourse. This loss of intellectual input was filled by Ghassan Kanafani who became an important figure among the Palestinian intellectuals. PFLP replaced the loss of Al-Hourriah newspaper with Al Hadaf (the goal). The reason for the intellectual's exodus was that PFLP did not adopt a Marxist-Leninist principle and was led by rightists such as Habash, Hani Al-Hindi and Wadi Hadad, arresting and harassing progressive members of the PFLP, Hawatmeh's strongest criticism was that PFLP did not break its relation with Arab regimes and it did not criticize PLO or Fatah harshly enough. Finally, according to Hawatmeh, the organization was led by the petit bourgeois class, and they did not call for the establishment of Marxism in the Arab world.⁴³

Habash criticized his former comrades. According to him PFLP was not yet ready to adopt Marxism fully and the cadre had to be first educated in Marxist principles before they could adopt it. Nevertheless, by the second National congress in 1969 the PFLP ideology was more clearly defined and it firmly placed PFLP as a Marxist-Leninist organization.⁴⁴

The early fractionalization of PFLP was used by Arab states to assert their influence by supporting the PFLP splinter factions. The leader of one of the PFLP splinter factions, Ahmed Jibril, an officer in the Syrian army prior to joining PFLP and his group PFLP-GC was supported by Syria while Habash was able to gain the support of Iraq,⁴⁵ and South Yemen which became an important base for the PFLP⁴⁶

Another problem facing the popular front was its rigid ideology and their hostility to Arab countries which they considered to be reactionary regimes. They also only allied with groups and countries that shared the same ideology such as the Soviet Union and other Marxist groups around the world. This led to PFLP becoming outcast in the PLO and the Arab world. Fatah

⁴² Hajjar Kanafi *Symposium of Palestine* 134

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Hajjar Kanafi *Symposium of Palestine*, 140

⁴⁵ Central Intelligence Agency. Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis (02.1982), 4

⁴⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, National Foreign Assessment Center, *The Supporters of International Terrorism*, 2

on the other hand was not as ideologically driven as PFLP and much more flexible which led to Fatah gaining more support from the Arab world.⁴⁷

The rivalry between Fatah and PFLP were ideological rather than a pure power struggle to control the PLO. Habash criticized Fatah and Yasser Arafat for not championing the Arab nationalism and not realizing that liberation of Palestine was dependent on Arab nationalism.⁴⁸

Another criticism Habash levied against Fatah was it only focused on liberation and not class struggle. According to PFLP, both were tied together since the working class were the ones who would suffer the most from Israel and lost the most from previous wars while the bourgeoisie would simply make peace to enrich their own class. According to Habash Fatah was a bourgeoisie organization who did not actually fight for the Palestinian masses and would cease to fight once they have achieved their objectives. PFLP's goals went beyond liberation and to the establishment of a Marxist revolutionary state.⁴⁹

Similar to Hezbollah in both view and practice the popular front was also openly hostile to western countries which they believed was the cause of Palestinians current predicament. Therefore, according to them attacking western nations specially the one's supporting Israel was fair game. This led to creation of PFLP external operations led by Wadi Haddad with the purpose to attack Israeli and western target abroad.⁵⁰

Following the 1967 defeat. PLO faced its first challenge when tension arose between Jordanian government led by king Hussain Bin Talal and the Palestinian guerrillas. PLO now launched raids from Jordan into Israel, which Jordan feared would lead to an unwanted war between Israel and Jordan. In addition PLO ran a state inside the kingdom flaunting Jordanian laws and authorities. While Fatah only wanted to be left alone by the Jordanian authorities the PFLP and other radical leftist group openly supported overthrowing the Jordanian monarchy and establishing a leftist revolutionary government like that of North Vietnam. This put a great deal of pressure on Arafat who wanted to avoid a confederation with Jordanian army and the radical PFLP.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Harold M. Cubert *The PFLP's Changing Role in the Middle East*, 158

⁴⁸ Habash, Interview. 1998

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Waage *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. 309

The final straw between Jordan and PFLP came in September 6, 1970, after PFLP's airline hijackings. After the hostages were released by the hijackers, King Hussein ordered his military to attack the PLO camps inside of Jordan. Initially PLO had the upper hand in the war occupying the town of Irbid, but Jordan found considerable support from USA and their Arab neighbors Iraq who had several thousand stationed in Jordan. The Iraqi army supported Jordan along with Nasserist Egypt. They initially supported the PLO but not to the extent that the PLO could eventually overthrow a fellow Arab leader. PFLP also sabotaged any support the PLO would have had in this war by hijacking an airplane and blowing it up in Egypt as a warning to Nasser.

The only support PLO found was from Syria who invaded Jordan with their tanks to help the Palestinians, but this attack was repulsed by the Jordanian air force. The brutal fighting left many Palestinian civilians dead. A ceasefire brokered by Nasser led to a brief respite in the hostilities until a flare up of fighting in July 1971 which led to PLO and other Palestinian groups to be expelled from Jordan.⁵²

Apart from the ideology the differences between Popular front and Fatah were military strategy. PFLP chose to undertake special operations guerilla warfare that would spread shock and awe in the international community. Wadi Haddad who was then responsible for PFLP military wing criticized Fatah strategy. According to Haddad the Palestinians would never be able to match the Israeli military might, rather than fighting Israel in a quantitative way they should be fighting in a qualitative way. Qualitative fighting according to Haddad meant was to target vital economic and military target as well conduct operation that would grab worldwide headlines. According to Haddad hijacking airplanes and holding the passenger's hostages would focus the world's attention on the fight of the Palestinians. Haddad proceeded to create a new unit of specially trained operators to undertake such missions.⁵³

On the July 24th, 1968, the first hijacking occurred on an EL AL flight from Rome to Ben Gurion airport. A team of three hijackers boarded the plane and after take-off the hijackers drew their weapons and declared that the plane was now hijacked and demanded that the pilots divert the flight path to Algeria. The pilots had no choice but to comply with the hijacker demands. Once the Airplane landed in Algeria the hijackers released all non-Jewish hostages, and made their demand, in exchange for the hostages Israel had to release

⁵² Waage *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* 310

⁵³ Yoram Schweitzer "Innovation in Terrorist Organizations The Case of PFLP and its Offshoots" *Strategic Insights* Volume 10, Issue 2 (summer 2010) 17

Palestinian prisoners. After 40 days of back-and-forth negotiations Israel caved into the PFLP demands and released 16 Palestinian prisoners.⁵⁴

PFLP followed up with more attacks on Israeli airlines, an EL AL flight in Athens was attacked by PFLP operatives. The attackers killed one mechanic and injured two other passengers. The two attackers were later captured by Greek authorities. February 1969 PFLP attacked another plane, Four PFLP members attacked EL AL plane Zurich airport with gun fire and grenades. The attack left five people dead including one of the hijackers.⁵⁵

The second hijacking was directed towards an American airline rather than an Israeli one. The PFLP justification was that the USA were just as responsible for the calamities of the Palestinians since it was one of the imperialist countries that supports Israel. On August 1969 two PFLP members hijacked TWA flight from Los Angeles to Tel Aviv. One of the hijackers was Leila Khaled who later became a Palestinian resistance icon. In her autobiography, she describes in detail what occurred during and after the hijacking. The hijackers according to Khaled forced the pilot to fly over Greece, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon and then landing in Syria.⁵⁶ The hijackers then proceeded to deplane every passenger and blew up the plane. The hostages and hijackers were detained by the Syrian authorities. All hostages were released except the six Israeli passengers who would later be exchanged for Syrian war captives. According to Leila Khaled she and her fellow hijacker were detained by the Syrian government because they thought that PFLP hijacked the airplane and flew it to Syria under order from Nassir to embarrass the Syrian government. After some months in detention the hijackers were released from Syrian custody.⁵⁷

PFLP later organized one of their biggest hijacking operations yet. On the 6th September 1970 operatives hijacked four airplanes (TWA flight 741, EL AL flight 219, Swissair flight 100). The TWA flight and the Swissair hijacking went on without a hitch but EL AL flight 219 resulted in failure, two of the hijackers were denied boarding, the two other hijackers Leila Khaled and the Nicaraguan member of Sandinista group Patrick Arguello who were posing as a married couple in order to not arouse suspicion were allowed boarding.⁵⁸ Unfortunately for the hijackers EL Planes had initiated several counter-terrorism measures following the former hijacking incidents. When the two hijackers announced their intentions, the pilot quickly

⁵⁴ Ibid 18

⁵⁵ "ATHENS INCIDENT Arabs attack Israeli jet". The Canberra Times. 27 December 1968.

⁵⁶ Leila Khaled *My People Shall Live* (London: Hodder and Stoughton 1973) 71

⁵⁷ Ibid 83

⁵⁸ Ibid 98

nosedived and one of the air marshals shot and killed Patrick Arguello, Leila Khaled was quickly subdued by the rest of the passengers, the plane landed in England and Khaled was arrested by the British authorities.⁵⁹

The Swiss air TWA planes landed as planned in an abandoned airfield in Jordan called Dawson's field. The passengers and hijackers disembarked, and the planes were blown up. This incident led to a great deal of embarrassment for the Jordanian authorities who were already greatly worried about the growing autonomy of the Palestinians inside their country. Negotiations between the PFLP and the countries of the hijacked passengers, The PFLP demands were the release of several Palestinian prisoners and some of the failed hijackers.⁶⁰ This was incident that led to the aforementioned Jordanian civil war.

Following the PLO expulsion from Jordan some Fatah members also adopted PFLP's tactics and started their own international terrorist attacks. First one was the Munich massacre which was perpetrated by a group calling themselves Black September made up of former Fatah members.

What made the external operations so successful is that Haddad utilized non-Palestinian individuals and groups to conduct his external terrorist attacks such as the Nicaraguan Patrick Arguello and the Spaniard Carlos the Jackal who is responsible for numerous terrorist attacks in the name of Haddad. He also used the Japanese red army to conduct the Lod airport massacre.⁶¹ These foreign individuals were an important asset to Haddad since non-Palestinians were less likely to be racially profiled by Israeli security forces.

As an example of the successes of using foreign terrorists was the Lod airplane massacre by the Japanese red army the operation was ordered by PFLP-EX. Israeli airport security failed to spot the attackers since it was highly unlikely that Japanese persons would conduct such a terrorist attack. What these non-Palestinian terrorists had in common was a shared Marxist ideology, hostility to the west and sympathy with the Palestinian struggle.⁶²

PFLP-EX relationship with other organizations was also based on mutual support. PFLP-EX operative has participated in attacks not tied to the Israeli-Palestine conflict the "Singapore operation" launched by Japanese Red Army and PFLP-EX where they blew up a shell oil

⁵⁹ Ibid 100

⁶⁰ Central intelligence Agency. Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis, Intelligence Bulletin 08.11.1970 1

⁶¹ Schweitzer *Innovation in Terrorist Organizations* 22

⁶² Hajjar *Kanafi Sympol of Palestine* 155-156

refinery in Singapore, the attack was aimed at the Shell company who according to both groups was monolithic capitalist company. PFLP-EX also tried to tie it to the Palestinian struggle by claiming that Singapore was in cahoots with Israel.⁶³

Later PFLP EX would develop into Hadad's own organization independent from PFLP's leadership. It's unknown when it became a separate organization, but it's believed that Hadad following the Dawson's field hijacking received order to stop his operations, but Haddad ignored this order and continued with his attacks. PFLP could no longer tolerate his rouge tactics. PFLP external operations would later decline after a series of failed terrorist attacks and after the death of Wadi Haddad and after Entebbe operation PFLP External operations broke up into smaller factions.⁶⁴

Following the Palestinians expulsion from Jordan. The PLO along with PFLP moved their operations to Lebanon. Lebanon had a sizeable Palestinian population living inside the refugee camps in the capital Beirut and it's the southern part bordering Israel,⁶⁵ the Palestinian presence caused great anxiety in the Maronite catholic community who felt that Palestinians would shift the power balance in the Muslims favor. The reason for the Maronites anxiety about the arrival of PLO was because of Lebanon's system of government heavily favored the Maronite Catholics. This led to antagonism between Muslim and Christians in Lebanon, although this tension was not based on religion or control of the government rather on ideology since most Lebanese Muslims and other sects' factions were leftist, pan Arabist and sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, while the Lebanese Maronite catholic tended to be conservative and pro-west.⁶⁶

The PLO and PFLP ran the areas under their control in Lebanon as quasi states just like they had done in Jordan earlier. The trend of setting a state within a state would be repeated by Hezbollah later. Fatah was initially content with running their business and not interfere with Lebanese affairs, while the PFLP and other Palestinian factions allied themselves with the Lebanese national movement which was a coalition of Muslim lefties and other non-Muslim leftist groups. The movement was headed by Kamal Jumblatt head of the Druze, Kamal family and leader of the progressive socialist party. The Lebanese National Movement aim

⁶³ The Foreign Relation Committee of The Popular Front for The Liberation of Palestine "Singapore Operation" PFLP Bulletin issue (9 .03.1974) 5

⁶⁴ Schweitzer *Innovation in Terrorist Organizations* 25

⁶⁵ Central intelligence Agency. Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis Lebanon: The growing strength of the Palestinians. December 1987

⁶⁶ Charles D. Smith "Palestine and The Arab-Israeli Conflict A History with Documents" (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004) 342-343

was to change the catholic Maronite dominated Lebanese government. The Maronite forces were known as Phalangist forces.

PFLP decision to get involved in the Lebanese conflict, was rationalized on the basis that the Phalangist forces were fascists and an extension of the imperialist government. Therefore joining the side of fellow leftist and anti-government forces was natural choice for PFLP.⁶⁷ Fatah would gradually get drawn into the conflict as it was becoming increasingly difficult to be a neutral party.

By 1975 clashes between the Maronites factions and the Palestinians were widespread in Beirut, The Lebanese capital was divided between ethnic lines where Christian's areas were under the control of Phalangist militias and Muslim and Palestinian areas. After a series of clashes between Phalangist and Palestinians which left mostly civilians killed Lebanon was plunged into a Civil war.⁶⁸

Early into the days of the Lebanese Civil war the Syrian government under Hafiz Al-Assad cautiously supported the Palestinian factions. Syria's support of these factions was not solely based on their hard liner stance on Israel but rather Syria's anxiety over Sadat peace deal with Israel. If Egypt made peace with Israel that would leave Syria isolated. However, Syria's support would not last long. In 1976 fearing the Maronites would be overrun by the Palestinians and LNM, Syria shifted their support to the Maronites factions. Syria preferred to maintain the status quo in Lebanon rather than having an uncontrollable situation developing in Lebanon. At the behest of Arab League Syria entered Lebanon as peace keeping force, however Assad used the approval of Arab League to strengthen Syrian influence over Lebanon instead of acting as a peacekeeping force.

Israel also sought to reduce the Palestinian's influence in Lebanon as well as the Syrians which meant arming the Phalangist forces and dealing with most pressing threat against Israel which was Palestinian quasi state in southern Lebanon. Israel not wanting to repeat what happened in Jordan started arming and training the Christian militia particularly the militias under Sad Haddad who had his base in the South.⁶⁹ Saad Hadad militia would later become a common adversary for both PFLP and Hezbollah.

⁶⁷ The Foreign Relation Committee of The Popular Front for The Liberation Of Palestine "Our Enemies" PFLP Bulletin (June 1974)

⁶⁸ Smith *Palestine and the Arab Israeli conflict* 344

⁶⁹ *Ibid* 345

Israel would take a more direct role when on March 11th 1978 Fatah guerrillas launched a raid into Israel killing 38 Israeli civilians. The massacre would be known as the Coastal Road Massacre. Three days later in response to the massacre Israel launched operation Litani and entered south Lebanon to drive out Palestinians. The operation into south Lebanon expelled the PLO and PFLP out of the South and Israel left southern Lebanon to the Saad Hadad militias in order to control that area.⁷⁰

The Israeli attack and the phalangist forces put a serious pressure on the Palestinians factions in Lebanon. These factors led to PFLP, and Fatah dominated PLO to put aside their differences to protect the Palestinian position in Lebanon, PFLP re-joined the PLO and even participated in 15th PNC session in 1981.⁷¹

In 1982 PLO and PFLP would face Israeli army in full force. Following the assassination of Israeli ambassador to United Kingdom Shlomo Argov by a PLO splinter group Black September. Israeli government in response to the assassination launched operation Peace for Galilee unlike the previous operation Israel hoped to drive out all Palestinian factions from Lebanon. In just 9 days the IDF's lightning invasion saw both the Syrian army and PLO defeated in Lebanon, what remained of PLO forces were now confined in Beirut which the IDF were besieging. The PLO managed to hold out for three months before reaching a cease fire agreement where PLO had to leave Lebanon. Fatah would relocate to Tunis and PFLP to Syria.⁷² The 1982 invasion of Israel would be the end of PFLP presence in Lebanon and the catalyst for the rise of Hezbollah.

On December 8th 1988 an Israeli military truck accidentally crashed into a car full of Palestinian workers killing many of the workers, the following days after the incident protest broke out in the occupied territories, which later developed into a full blown uprising. The underlying response for the unrest was result of years of tension between the Palestinians and Israeli occupation force coupled with the frustration by the lack of progress from Palestinian liberation movements.⁷³ PFLP was quick to capitalize on the unrest, as they had an extensive network of underground grassroots activists in the occupied Palestinian territories which they utilized to organize the protests.⁷⁴ Hezbollah in Lebanon uses the same strategy of asserting

⁷⁰ «Operation Litani (1978) Ynetnews 03.15.09 <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3686831,00.html>

⁷¹ Leopardi, *the Palestinian left and its decline* *Loyal Opposition*. 22-24

⁷² Smith. *Palestine and the Arab Israeli conflict* 367-368

⁷³ Cubert. *PFLP changing role in the Middle east* 64

⁷⁴ Leopardi. *the Palestinian left and its decline* 108-115

their influence in civil society particularly workers associations and using said influence of civil society to call in strikes and protest whenever the need arises.

During the first intifada the secular Palestinian groups including PFLP faced a new challenge from the increasingly popular Islamist faction Hamas. This group was established by the Muslim Brotherhood and became increasingly popular in the OPT.⁷⁵ Hamas's vision for Palestine was not simply liberation of Palestinian territories but also the establishment of an Islamic state. Hamas's view was that Islam is at war with the Jewish people and their struggle was holy jihad against enemies of Islam.⁷⁶ Naturally the secular camp which was composed of Christian and secular Palestinians saw this as a great threat to them furthermore, the rise of the Islamist camp inside the OPT could turn the Palestinian liberation cause into a Islamic cause.

Early into the uprising PFLP had a significant advantage in that it was well established in Palestinian territories through their organization in the OPT called Action Front which was associated with several labor movements inside the OPT. PFLP first demands in the intifada was that the UN should enter Palestinian territories and document Israel's oppression against the Palestinians.⁷⁷ The leadership of the Intifada called Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) a coalition of intifada representatives from the main Palestinian faction including PFLP this coalition formed this was to strengthen PLO's authority during the and channels the Intifada demands to the Israel and the International community.⁷⁸

This time the PFLP did embrace the idea of negotiations with Israel and the USA but according to them it was still too early to start the negotiations as the uprising had to be escalated in order put more pressure on the Israelis and in turn give them more leverage on the negotiation table. Hezbollah unlike the PFLP refuses to recognize or even negotiate with Israel and only holds negotiations thru intermediaries

Israeli response to the UNLU was that the intifada was a spontaneous eruption of mass protests in OPT that has nothing to do with PLO or any other Palestinian faction therefore UNLU was not representative of the demands from the protestors. These allegations were quickly dismissed as UNLU was better able assert its control on the intifada and the Palestinians protesters accepted the UNLU leadership by championing the UNLU demands.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Ibid 111

⁷⁶ Cubert, *PFLP changing role in the Middle east.* 70

⁷⁷ Leopardi, *the Palestinian left and its decline.* 116

⁷⁸ Cubert, *PFLP changing role in the Middle east.* 64

⁷⁹ Leopardi, *the Palestinian left and its decline.* 116-117

On July 31th 1988 King Hussein of Jordan relinquished his claim over the West Bank according to the king of Jordan the uprising was a sign that the Palestinians wanted self-rule and thus recognizing the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.⁸⁰ However this was only a small victory for the Palestinians after all Jordan had virtually no control over the West Bank additionally, this also resulted in Jordan cutting its aid to the West Bank and the suspensions of all OPT members of the Jordanian parliament.⁸¹ The PLO seized the political vacuum left by Jordan to form a government inside OPT and transform the OPT into an independent Palestinian state on the November 15th 1988 the PNC held an extraordinary meeting where the Palestinian declaration of Independence was signed, the independence document referred to the 1948 UN partition plan as the borders of the new Palestinian state, and announced no to armed struggle to achieve their goal, this meant that the PLO indirectly accepted Israel right to exist. PFLP voted in favor of the declaration despite them opposing no armed struggle.⁸²

As the Intifada carried on Israel adopted more repressive approaches to curb the uprising, in turn the Palestinian protesters became more disillusioned and radicalized by Israel excessive use of force which resulted in an increase in violence in the OPT. The intifada violence putted a great deal of pressure on the PLO to reach some sort of resolution to the intifada, Arafat wanted to reach a diplomatic agreement with Israel and USA.⁸³ The PLO leader was facing immense pressure from both the radical elements in the Palestinian movement such as the PFLP and Hamas and Israel who only wanted to negotiate with Palestinians from the OPT, further hampering Arafat's peace effort were the various armed groups not under PLO's control. His lack of control resulted in negotiations between the two parties failing after Palestine Liberation Force attacked a restaurant in Tel Aviv.⁸⁴

Despite the PFLPs opposition to Arafat peace effort they were unable to challenge Fatah since it was still the biggest group within PLO and most leftist groups were unable to coordinate with each other to challenge Fatah. What further hampered leftists' coordination is that each group had a different view on how to proceed with the intifada. For example, the Palestinian

⁸⁰ King Hussein Bin Taleb Address to the Nation 31 July 1988 http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/88_july31.html

⁸¹ Leopardi, *the Palestinian left and its decline*. 119

⁸² Ibid 119-120

⁸³ Ibid 121

⁸⁴ ⁸⁴ Cubert, *PFLP changing role in the Middle east*. 65-66

Communist party wanted open negotiations with Israel while the Democratic front for liberation of Palestine supported Fatah in opening negotiations.⁸⁵

However PFLP opposition to Arafat came only in condemnation and criticism little action was taken to stop the peace talks, PFLP still wanted to preserve PLO unity in part because of the rising threat of the Islamist factions who challenged the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, therefore a complete break with the PLO would weaken the secular factions and PFLP would be isolated from the PLO.

Further hampering PFLP's intifada initiatives was the divide between the diaspora and OPT members. Most of the old guard of the PFLP leadership was part of the diaspora and the younger members lived inside the OPT this created major disagreement and animosity towards how the organization was lead. Firstly, PFLP weak resistance against Fatah peace effort led to disenfranchisement between the OPT members who were bearing the full brunt of the IDF crackdown.⁸⁶

These factors led to the PFLP not being able to effectively capitalize on the popular uprising, as the PFLP faced several factors that hampered it from taking effective decision making. PFLP displayed a painfully casual political line during the intifada which was a far cry from the image PFLP displayed during 70s and the early 80 where the "old" PFLP would see such an uprising as golden opportunity to challenge Israel and Fatah.

Towards the early 90s the PFLP and PLO saw itself in very precarious position after a geopolitical blunder in which the PLO supported Iraq during the first gulf war resulting in gulf countries cutting their financial support to PLO.⁸⁷ additionally the fall of the Soviet Union also meant that PFLP lost its main ideological backer. The economic woes of PFLP and PLO also worsened with Arafat leadership, Arafat now was allocating much of the organization's funds to factions and officials loyal to him, this mismanagement of funds would greatly benefit Arafat peace effort since the funds were allocated to officials who were supportive of his views on the peace talks while depriving the groups that could hamper his effort.⁸⁸

The intifada at this stage was also losing much of its steam the heavy-handed approach by the Israeli had resulted in many of the intifada organizers getting arrested and the protester were

⁸⁵ Leopardi *the Palestinian left and its decline* 122

⁸⁶ Ibid 127-129

⁸⁷ Cubert «PFLP changing role in the Middle east» 66-67

⁸⁸ Leopardi "the Palestinian left and its decline" 143-144

losing much of their drive after many years of violence by the IDF. This would hamper PFLPs control of their branch in the OPT since many of their members were the most active organizers in the OPT, the old guard control over the OPT branches were so compromised that young PFLP members started organizing their own brigades without the old guard knowledge or approval.⁸⁹

Arafat's decision to enter the Madrid negotiation saw what many Palestinians believed a betrayal of the intifada as negotiations were centered on OPT being a self-governing territory and not an independent state. This was seen by the PFLP as the Arafat submitting to US's influence and a betrayal of the intifadas goals.⁹⁰ Despite this PFLP would not break with the PLO and instead froze their membership in the executive committee⁹¹. Arafat on the other hand might not have much of a choice but to negotiate since the PLO at this time was near bankruptcy and many Palestinians in OPT have lost their faith in the organization. Therefore, Arafat only solution would be to negotiate with Israel on their terms to reach any sort of agreement that would benefit the Palestinians and put an end to the violence.

In 1993 negotiations between Israel and the PLO had taken place in Oslo and culminated in the signing of declaration of principles.⁹² This meant that Israel would withdraw from Gaza and Jericho area and in return PLO would recognize Israel right to exist and stop all militant activities. PLO was given the right to administer the areas in Gaza and the west bank but not as an independent state.⁹³ Declaration of principles did not resolve the issue of Palestinian refugees right to return or Israel's building Jewish settlements inside the OPT. A huge blow to the Palestinians, one that PFLP could not accept and thus PFLP finally withdrew from the PLO.⁹⁴

A new rejectionist front was formed with PFLP and DFLP to counter the peace deal and Arafat's power, both rejectionist organization announced the creation of a unified leadership which meant that both would work together to counter Arafat's power in the PLO by handing in their resignation and demanding new elections.⁹⁵ Further adding to unified front arsenal was the attempt to coordinate and form an alliance with Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad

⁸⁹ Ibid 145

⁹⁰ Cubert *PFLP changing role in the Middle east* 68

⁹¹ Ibid 69

⁹² Cubert *PFLP changing role in the Middle east* 83

⁹³ Declaration of principles 13.11.1993

⁹⁴ Leopardi *the Palestinian left and its decline* 153

⁹⁵ Ibid 156-158

and for while they were able to make headway.⁹⁶ But ideological differences aside there were major disagreements between them that made it unviable to corporate with the Islamist factions namely that the Islamist factions wanted to completely remove the PLO while the leftist factions only wanted to reform it.⁹⁷

The unified leadership hampered the peace process by boycotting the Palestinian legislative council elections in 1996, the boycott a miscalculation by Unified leadership since the voter turnout was still quite high.⁹⁸ Additionally, the unified front did not manage to coordinate properly after the 21st PNC session PFLP suspended its membership from PLO, DFLP did not follow suit showing it unwillingness to break with PLO. Further hampering the Coalition was the hostility between both organization's cadres. DFLP member accused PFLP members of not willing to cooperate and that PFLP alone represented the left while PFLP member scoffed at DFLP for its soft stance toward the struggle.⁹⁹

1999 the PFLP and Fatah finally opened negotiations as the PFLP no longer could oppose Fatah directly. Not wanting to lose relevancy they had to maintain their foothold inside the OPT and PLO's institutions. The negotiations were centered around releasing PFLP prisoners in PNA prisons, reform PLO's institutions, the reactivation of the PNC and confronting Israeli settlement building. Fatah-PFLP meeting would be successful and resulted in high ranking PFLP member Abu Ali Mustafa returning to OPT after 32 years exile.¹⁰⁰

The post Oslo peace situation in the OPT was generally peaceful even though Palestinian national authorities under Arafat's leadership were plagued by corruption. Arafat had managed to build a powerbase in the OPT by developing a patron-client system, additionally PA security service had become increasingly authoritarian. The national struggle movements were also severely weakened at this point, and the PFLP was no exception. These secular movements had to compete with both Fatah and Hamas with the latter being quite popular in the OPT since they were filling the void left after the PLO.¹⁰¹

PFLP in this period attempted to undermine the PA institutions by strengthening its ties with the various Palestinian non-governmental organizations, by working with the NGOs and strengthening them would ultimately be a counterweight to the Palestinian Authorities and

⁹⁶ Ibid 159

⁹⁷ Ibid 162

⁹⁸ Ibid 163

⁹⁹ Ibid 164-165

¹⁰⁰ Ibid 171-172

¹⁰¹ Ibid 185-186

democratize the political landscape in OPT. PNA countered the threat from NGOs by drafting a law set to regulate NGO activities by requiring the them to be licensed by the PNA, NGOs one of the largest of them being led and organized by PFLP tried to fight the law but ultimately did not manage to stop PNC from asserting its control over NGOs.¹⁰²

After the PFLPs 5th national congress George Habash stepped down as their secretary general and Abu Ali Mustafa took his place.¹⁰³ At this period the PFLP found itself in a very weak position their attempt to build up NGOs failed and their effort to counter PLOs power and the peace process had yet to show any results. PFLP would now have to focus its effort on the ongoing negotiation process between the PLO and Israel, PFLP even suspended its armed wing to show its commitment to PNA and the peace process.

Despite the peace process reducing the violence, the Palestinian public did not see it as bringing any positive changes to OPT since Israel still controlled the territories in the OPT and the Jewish settlements were still getting built. This disappointment led to a great deal of anger and resentment in the Palestinian communities, anger was also directed towards Arafat and the PNA, several PLO groups no longer accepted his authority such as Fatah linked armed group Tanzim.¹⁰⁴ These grievances were the underlying causes to the new uprising which started after Israeli president Shimon Perez visited the temple mount on the 28 September 2000.¹⁰⁵

This new uprising was even more violent than the last one as the IDF resorted to using inappropriate amount of force on the Palestinians. In turn the Palestinians became more militant, shootouts and violent attacks became more common eventually becoming the main strategy of the Palestinians. Suicide bombings became a more prevalent tactic used Hamas and PFLP.¹⁰⁶ The IDF's main tactic was targeted killing and raids. Despite the violence the PFLP welcomed the intifada as they believed it would revive armed resistance against Israel.¹⁰⁷ Hamas and the PFLP did cooperate in this intifada however apart for some co-planning the main factions in the uprising did not cooperate or coordinate with each other and

¹⁰² Ibid 187

¹⁰³ Ibid 189

¹⁰⁴ Smith *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict* 502

¹⁰⁵ Ibid 500

¹⁰⁶ Ibid 503

¹⁰⁷ Leopardi *the Palestinian left and its decline* 196

in many cases had to compete for the popularity among the Palestinians with Hamas becoming increasingly popular.¹⁰⁸

While Hezbollah leadership remained largely intact IDF targeted assassination would decapitate the PFLP's leadership. A serious blow would strike the leadership on August 27th, 2001, the organizations secretary general got assassinated by the IDF. PFLP central command elected Ahamad Saadat as the new leader, Saadat was the first non-diaspora PFLP leader. He had experience leading the underground groups in the west bank.¹⁰⁹ Saadat strategy was to preserve unity among the Palestinian factions during the intifada, Saadat attempted to mediate between Hamas and PNA to achieve political unity and agree on common political goals.¹¹⁰ PFLP during this intifada also re assert itself as a force within the Palestinian liberation movement by increasing its attack against Israel, suicide bombing became a tactic increasingly used by the PFLP. Their overall strategy was to first achieve total liberation of Gaza and west bank, establishment of the state of Palestine in these area and finally total liberation would launch from these areas like the North Vietnamese during the Vietnam war.

PFLP retaliated to the assassination of their former leader by assassinating the minister of tourism Rehavam Ze'evi.¹¹¹ Israel responded by besieging PLO's Arafat headquarter Mukataa, Israel also increasingly targeted PFLP militants. PNA security service prompted by Israel arrested Saadat and other two PFLP leaders.¹¹² This seriously hampered their ability to fight and compete with Hamas since Israel military response was initially centered in the West Bank against the secular camp of the Palestinian factions. On March 29th 2002 Israel launched operation Defensive Shield in the west bank to choke out any resistance in the area. Several Palestinian cities were besieged including Arafat stronghold again, this time Israel demanded that the PFLP leadership which were imprisoned inside PNA jails to be transferred to Jericho prison.¹¹³ US/ Israel also demanded a reform to the PNA by mainly halting PNA security forces from fighting with the Palestinian factions and start working with the IDF to secure the West bank and to reform the PNA by curbing the power of the president Arafat.¹¹⁴ PNA had little choice but to accept these demands if PNA were to refuse the IDF would storm Arafat's stronghold to capture or kill.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid 199

¹⁰⁹ Ibid 203

¹¹⁰ Ibid 204

¹¹¹ Smith *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict* 505

¹¹² Leopardi *the Palestinian left and its decline* 204

¹¹³ Ibid 205-206

¹¹⁴ Ibid 207

By the end of operation Defensive Shield, the PFLP power was nearly eliminated most of its prominent leaders were in jail and its militants killed or captured this led to PFLP taking on a more of a political and mediator role within the Palestinian political space.

PFLP was open to negotiations with Israel and at the same time wanted to mediate the conflict between Hamas and Fatah. PFLP wished for the Islamic factions to join the PNA and make a unified Palestinian front. This proved to be a difficult task since Hamas refused to recognize PLO as Palestinians sole representative.¹¹⁵

On September 11th, 2004, Arafat died and PNA held an election to vote for the new president, PFLP backed the Palestinian Peoples Party candidate Mustafa Barghouti.¹¹⁶ A sign of PFLP's weakening was that they did not nominate a candidate of their own, since Abu Ali was assassinated and Saadat was imprisoned these two represented the last leaders in the PFLP who had grassroots Palestinian support while the remaining leadership had little support and little military experience.

The new president of PNA was Mahmoud Abbas a Fatah leader, his first action as president was to negotiate a ceasefire with Israel in Egypt and in 2005 all Palestinian factions signed the Cairo declaration which put an end to al-Aqsa intifada.¹¹⁷

Following Hamas victory in PNC legislative elections the Fatah-Hamas conflict reached its peak. PFLP, Abbas did not accept Hamas victory over Fatah and rejected Hamas call to form a unity government he also extended his control over the security force and the finance ministry this violation of Palestinian law led to pro Hamas demonstrations which in turn led to clashes with pro Fatah members and PNA security forces.¹¹⁸ PFLP initially sided with Hamas and called for Abbas to respect the result of the elections, at the same time they could not fully embrace Hamas since they still refused to join the PLO.¹¹⁹

Several attempts were made to reconcile the two factions. One by the PFLP which did not come to fruition, and the Mecca declaration in 2007 which both parties signed called for power sharing and both parties respect all agreements signed by the PLO. Both parties agreed to the Mecca deal but this did not put an end to the conflict. Members from both parties continued to clash with each other and foreign aid to the OPT was halted because of the

¹¹⁵ Ibid 208

¹¹⁶ Ibid 211

¹¹⁷ Mark Oliver "Sharon and Abbas agree ceasefire" The Guardian 02.08.2005
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/feb/08/israel4>

¹¹⁸ Leopardi *the Palestinian left and its decline*. 214

¹¹⁹ Ibid 216

inclusion of Hamas. Both parties were engaged in an arms race Fatah supplied by USA and Hamas by allegedly Iran.¹²⁰ In June 2007 tension between the two parties led to Hamas expelling Fatah from Gaza an armed take over this led to the PFLP finally denouncing Hamas and siding with Abbas. PFLP had now no choice but to accept Abbas leadership and the peace deal with Israel since it could no longer face Israel alone and the party had become too dependent on PNA institutions to oppose Abbas on their own with the only opposition to Abbas being Hamas.¹²¹

Conclusion

PFLP journey from a radical Palestinian organization into a marginalized and pragmatic group willing to compromise with groups with contrasting belief, represented the weakening power of Marxist movement in the middle East during the end of the cold war. PFLP in their early years were unable to compete with Fatah. Their radical ideology led to many Palestinians embracing the more moderate Fatah, and their early radical and violent actions led to severe consequences for them and the Palestinian nationalist movement. The painful lessons from Jordan and Lebanon led them to adopt a pragmatic approach. PFLP were unable to find a territory to control where they could establish state where they could effectively fight Israel. Their decline in the 80s was tied with the decline in leftist movement in the Middle east and the rise of Islamic movements. From 2005 to today the PFLP remains a relatively small organization overshadowed by the bigger Palestinian organization like Hamas and Fatah.

¹²⁰ Ibid 217-218

¹²¹ Ibid 219-219

3. Hezbollah

The Lebanese people have historically been separated by the various religious sects in the country. The Lebanese government likewise is organized by the National Pact, an informal agreement which stipulates that the highest office must be a Maronite Christian, the president a Sunni Muslim and the speaker of parliament a Shia Muslim.¹²²

Each of the Lebanese sects have their own powerful families who were seen as the leaders or spokesperson of their respective sects, known to the Lebanese as “zaim”, meaning rulers. The “zaiims” role within Lebanese society is to provide his sect with security by protecting them from harm and by providing steady work in the community as well as representing his sect in the Lebanese government. For the services by the zaim his subjects repay him with loyalty. This Client patron (zuama) system has shaped much of Lebanon’s society since the Ottoman period until Lebanon’s independence from France and in some cases to this very day.

The Shiites in post- independence Lebanon still lived in poor conditions compared with their Sunni and Christian countrymen. Shiites were also underrepresented in the government, public sector and education.¹²³ The Shia zuama who owned most of the agricultural land in south and Bekka valley where most of them inhabited meant that most worked as sharecroppers to their zuama landowners. This was an additional factor that led to Shiites having less wealth in comparison to the other sects in Lebanon, also considering that many Shiites prior to the 60s worked in agriculture, the Zuama system was more prominent for this sect than other in Lebanon.¹²⁴

Nevertheless, the condition of the Shiites began to improve in the 60s under then Lebanon’s President Fouad Chehab who worked to improve their situation and increase their presence in government, the military and education. He also set out to improve the impoverished areas which they inhabited. Chehab policies greatly improved the Shiites condition in Lebanon. During Chehab presidency Shiites also started to emigrate and become more urbanized settling in Lebanon’s urban areas in the outskirts of the capital Beirut, and the southern city of Sour. The emigration was also directed towards Gulf countries and West Africa where they

¹²² Joseph Dasher, *Hezbollah: The Political economy off the Party of God* (London: Pluto Press, 2016), 11-12

¹²³ Daher *the Political Economy of the Party of God* 11-13.

¹²⁴ Idib 14

became involved in real estate business and banking, reinvesting their wealth back into Lebanon by purchasing land owned by the traditional Zuama landowners.¹²⁵

Further weakening the power of the old Zuama families was the new class of Shia clergy who started to emerge in 70's. These new religious scholars had studied in the Iraqi city of Najaf, a major hub for studies in Shia Islam. The new emerging class of clergy were much more politically active and worked to improve the condition of the Shiite Lebanese who despite president Chehab improvements were still greatly disadvantaged in comparison to the other sects.¹²⁶

The most prominent members of the new class-conscious clergy was Musa Al Sadr, originally born in Iran to Lebanese parents. Al-Sadr studied at the Islamic university in Najaf, and later travelled to Lebanon where his charisma and will to better the lives of Lebanese Shiites helped jumpstart Shia political organization. Sadr helped establish the Supreme Islamic Shia council of Lebanon (SISC) - an organization tasked with electing muftis and overseeing other Shia Muslim organization whose members were prominent members of the Shia clergy class. The establishment of SISC helped to give Shia more say in the government by channeling their grievances.¹²⁷

Sadr second achievement came in 1974 after establishing the first Shiite political party called the Movement of the Disinherited (Harakat al Muharimon). This party had its own armed branch called Amal (Afwaj al Moqawama al Lubnani),¹²⁸ having an armed wing was seen as necessary addition since tensions in Lebanon was at an all-time high. Musa al Sadr was seen as an icon for Lebanese Shias and respected by members of other Lebanese sects.

Unfortunately, on August 25th '1978 he and three others of his companions travelled to Libya to meet with Muammar Gaddafi, after the meeting in Libya Sadr and his three companions were never seen again.¹²⁹

A trend with both PFLP, Hezbollah and Amal was their roles bettering the luck of the downtrodden people in the Middle East. With the PFLP it was the Arab working class people in general and the Palestinian who faced the Israeli aggression and lived inside refugee camps in horrid condition while Amal and later Hezbollah answered the demands of Lebanese

¹²⁵ Idib 17-18

¹²⁶ Eitan Avani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization* (London Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) 50

¹²⁷ Ibid 55

¹²⁸ Daher, *the Political Economy of the Party of God 19*

¹²⁹ Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: a Short History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007) 21

Shiites. However, Amal and later Hezbollah made an great effort in bettering the condition of this class by establishing aid and social service organization while PFLP did not.

Thanks to Musa Sadr's efforts Shia Lebanese were better able to channel their grievances to Lebanese government and more importantly better equipped to handle the sectarian violence that had gripped the nation following the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war. Prior to the official outbreak of the war tension between the Muslim and Christian factions were at an all-time high.

As mentioned above adding fuel to the fire was the mass influx of Palestinian refugees and Palestinian Militants to Lebanon following the Jordanian civil war. The Palestinian groups that entrenched themselves in Lebanon and became important allies to LNM. This greatly upset the power balance between the LNM and Phalangist forces.

Most historians date the start of the Lebanese civil war to 1975 after an incident in Beirut where unknown gunmen opened fire on a bus full of Palestinians. Soon after this incident sporadic fighting erupted in the Capital and elsewhere in Lebanon.¹³⁰

A year later Syria entered the war on the Falangist side. Originally Syria was on the Palestinian side but fearing the growing strength of the Palestinians. Amal was also dissatisfied with the increased Palestinian autonomy. Southern Lebanon where majority of Shia resided became a major Fatah stronghold, greatly upsetting Amal. Operation Litani in 1978 led to great further tension between Palestinians and Amal skirmishes between Amal and Fatah were regular in Southern Lebanon. 78' would also see the Shia's most important leader at that time Mousa al Sadr disappear in Libya.

By the start of the 1980s three events would lead to the creation of Hezbollah, the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the 1982 invasion of Lebanon and finally the growing discontent many Shiites held towards Amal during the civil war.

The Najaf new class of Shiite clerics also included Suhail al Tufalily, Abbas Al Moussavi and Ragheb al Harb who all played a part in establishing Hezbollah. In addition to receiving a religious education they were also introduced to religious activism and Islamic revolutionary thought, many of them during their stay in Najaf joined the Iraqi dawah party. Later when

¹³⁰ Juan De Onis «22 PALESTINIANS KILLED IN BEIRUT» *New York times* 14 April 1975
<https://www.nytimes.com/1975/04/14/archives/22-palestinians-killed-in-beirut-are-reported-shot-on-bus-by.html>

they returned to Lebanon and led religious seminars these ideals conveyed to Shiites youth in Lebanon,¹³¹

Aiding in the growing Shiite revolutionary current in Lebanon was decline in popularity Amal experienced in the late 70s and as mentioned above Musa Al Sadr disappearance in 1978. For Amal, this was a great loss since he was held in such high regard in the Lebanese Shia community. Additionally, the same year Israel launched operation Litani to drive out the PLO from south Lebanon, this had a profound negative impact on the Shia community as the operation led to great deal of destruction and loss of life. Amal response to Israel incursion was non-excitant mainly because Amal at this stage was hostile to Palestinian guerrillas, which led to many Shiites who held a staunch anti-Israeli stance and supported Palestinian cause to be disenfranchised by Amal.¹³² The second Israeli incursion came in 1982, a much more substantial operation than the previous one with the aim of completely expelling PLO from Lebanon, the second Israeli war was also much more destructive to the Shia community adding more hatred against Israel from the Shiite community.

After the 1979 Iranian revolution the old Shah regime was overthrown. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini who was a leader in the Revolution came to power and adopted a religious system of government known as Wilayat Al faqih or the guardianship of the jurisprudence. This meant that the country was under the guardianship of highest Shia Islamic clergy.

For the religious Shiites in Lebanon the Iranian revolution galvanized them, as the situation for the Lebanese Shiites was quite dire as Israel was seemingly gaining the upper hand over the Palestinians. This was especially true after Egypt who was at this point Israel strongest rival, signed the peace deal with Israel, the revolution and the new Islamic government held a staunch pro Palestine anti-Israeli stance which was seen as a beacon of hope for the Shiites who were still suffering from Israeli aggression.¹³³

For the religious Shiites, the Iranian revolution and the new Islamic government was a model to follow and replicate in. Iran also eager to spread the revolution sent 1500 the revolutionary guard corps members during the summer of 1982 to Beqaa valley in Lebanon under the supervision of the Iranian ambassador to Lebanon Ali Akbar Mohtashemi. His mission was to oversee the military training of both Lebanese and Palestinians to fight against Israel and its

¹³¹ Eitan, *Hezbollah from revolution to institutionalization* 59-60

¹³² Eitani, *Hezbollah from revolution to institutionalization* 56

¹³³ Hassan Nasrallah, Sayyed Nasrallah's Interview with Masseur Especial Journal. interview by Masseur especial Journal 1 October 2019 <https://english.khamenei.ir/news/7053/Interview-with-Sayyid-Hassan-Nasrallah-the-Secretary-General>

allies.¹³⁴ According to Nasrallah these IRGC forces were initially supposed to fight the IDF alongside Syrian and Palestinian forces but as the Israeli operation proved to be limited after they pulled out of Beirut. The IRGC mission changed to training and assisting Shiite and Palestinian forces in Lebanon's Beqaa valley.¹³⁵

Here sources conflict on how or when Hezbollah were formed as no one outside the party is privileged to this part of their history. It's generally understood that several armed Shiite groups such as Islamic Amal an offshoot of Amal led by Hussein Al Mussawi, Islamic committees and the Ulemma of Bekaa valley who all trained in the IRGC barracks and had the same goals: expelling Israel and other western forces from Lebanon and the dissolution of the Lebanese government in favour of Islamic government.¹³⁶ The new organization elected nine members to act as representatives and led this group, the nine members including Abbas Al Moussawi travelled to Iran and met with Khomeini where the imam gave them his blessing to start their campaign.¹³⁷

The Shiite factions who previously fought Israeli occupation now united into one group called Hezbollah, this new organization had a similar structure to IRGC, and received funding and training from Iran. November 11th 1982 Hezbollah undertook their first operation, a truck filled with explosives driven by Hezbollah member Ahmad Al Kassir, his target was the IDF headquarters in Sour.¹³⁸ Hezbollah did not take responsibility for that attack both to protect the village where the suicide bomber hailed from and the organization as a whole since at this early stage Hezbollah was still small and vulnerable. However, the attack set the precedent for future Hezbollah attacks, later suicide bombings targeted US and French forces under Multinational Force in Lebanon (MNF). The MNF arrived in Lebanon as a peace force to oversee the expulsion of PLO from Lebanon and to help the Lebanese government to disarm the militias and keep the peace. However, MNF got more involved in the civil war when they bombarded LNM positions that were threatening Lebanese Armed Forces positions in Beirut. Additionally much criticism was directed at the proposed May 17 accord by MNF which would limit the number of arms LAF was allowed to have.¹³⁹ Hezbollah saw MNF as an extension of the Israeli occupation, because of the proposed May 17 accord. In Hezbollah's

¹³⁴ Daher, *the Political Economy of the Party of Good* 27

¹³⁵ Nasrallah, interview.

¹³⁶ Dominique, Avon, Anaïs-Trissa Khatchadourian trans. Jane Marie Todd Hezbollah: A History of the "Party of God" (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2015) 22-23,

¹³⁷ Nasrallah, interview

¹³⁸ Naim Qassem, , Dalia Khalil trans. "Hezbollah: The story from within" (London, Saqi Books, 2005) 89

¹³⁹ Idib 92-93

view the West and the US in particular is the enemy of Islam, despite MNF's mission of helping the Lebanese government, which Hezbollah also saw as an illegitimate government.

On April 1983 Hezbollah struck again. An explosive truck crashed into the US embassy killing 63 people and in the same year Hezbollah struck a significant blow against MNF. Two trucks filled with explosives struck the barracks housing US marines and French paratroopers killing 241 marines, 58 paratroopers and 6 Lebanese civilians.¹⁴⁰ Hezbollah however never took responsibility for these attacks another group called Islamic Jihad headed by Imad Mughniyeh took responsibility. Islamic Jihad is largely believed to be a cover for Hezbollah additionally, the leader of Islamic Jihad Imad Mughniyeh became a high-ranking member of Hezbollah.

The attack shocked the US, who following the deadly attack still didn't know exactly who Islamic Jihad were or on whose behalf the attack was carried out. Initial blame was placed at Syria and Iran, Syria denied having anything to do with the attack while Iran praised the attack. US and France responded by bombing IRGC barrack in Lebanon and carrying out a alleged assassination attempt against Hezbollah spiritual guide Fadlallah. However, the huge loss of life after the suicide bombing prompted the MNF to pull out of Lebanon thus giving Hezbollah their first victory.

These attacks also coincided with a series of hijacking of foreigners by Islamic Jihad including a US army Colonel William Richard Higgins and William Buckley both of whom died in captivity. While the motives for the suicide attack were more straight forward the kidnappings had several motives; hostage exchange for captured Shia militants, Iranian diplomat captured by falangist forces and also as a pressure tool against the US. The Iran-Iraq war was raging and Iran was in desperate need of advanced weapons US was secretly selling weapons to Iran the hostages were used to pressure the United States to increase the weapons sales to Iran.¹⁴¹

Hezbollah also targeted civilian airlines in two separate occasions. The first one was a TWA airplane, one American hostage was killed, and after negotiation mediated by Nabih Berry the hostages were released in exchange for Shia prisoners held in Israel. On April 5th, 1988, the second Kuwaiti plane was hijacked this time the demands were the release of 17 prisoners allegedly involved in the Khobar tower bombing in Kuwait. This time the Kuwaiti government

¹⁴⁰ Dominique and Khatchadourian *Hezbollah: A History of the "Party of God"* 27

¹⁴¹ Idib 28-29

refused to give into the hijacker demands and after 15 days the hostages were released in exchange for free passage for the hijackers.¹⁴²

Just like the PFLP Hezbollah announced itself to the world thru use of violence. PFLP hijacking and attacking international targets and Hezbollah suicide and hijacking attacks. Both can be categorized as terrorism, however a minor difference between PFLP and Hezbollah was that when PFLP held hostages they were treated with great care in contrast to Hezbollah who executed and regularly abused hostages. PFLP hostage taking was a PR campaign aimed mainly at the western world therefore appearing sympathetic was important. However, both campaigns can be seen as PR stunts since this attack help to put both on the map in an environment where there were several armed groups to compete with.

Apart from its terrorism campaign in the early 80's what defined Hezbollah in this period was its bloody rivalry with their secular counterpart Amal. Unlike PFLP's bloodless rivalry with Fatah, Hezbollah and Amal rivalry would turn bloody. The main reason for the conflict between the two militias was ideological differences. Hezbollah goal was the establishment of an Islamic republic where Shiite clerics had much more political power. Amal on the other hand favored a democratic government.¹⁴³ Adding to the tension was Hezbollah's enforcement of strict Islamic law in the area that they operated in mostly the suburb of west Beirut and South Lebanon, shops that sold alcohol were bombed, women who didn't dress modestly were harassed.¹⁴⁴ Communist were also targeted and assassinated by Hezbollah.¹⁴⁵ The second source of tension was Hezbollah constant denunciation of leftist factions and Syrian government who were allies of Amal.¹⁴⁶

Hezbollah despite their fiery rhetoric and their violent actions demonstrated significant constraint after Syrian army deployed 8000 soldiers in Beirut, following a request from Lebanon's prime minister Selim Hoss who wanted to reduce the militias power in Beirut. The Syrian army stormed Hezbollah barracks in Beirut and executed 26 members of Hezbollah, following this massacre thousands of Hezbollah supporters marched in the streets demanding justice and revenge against Syria, Hezbollah leadership urged restraint instead of answering with violence.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Norton *Hezbollah a short history* 41-43 73-75

¹⁴³ Idib 34

¹⁴⁴ Daher *Hezbollah the Political Economy of Lebanon's Party of God* 28-29

¹⁴⁵ Norton *Hezbollah a Short History of the Party of God* 37

¹⁴⁶ Dominique and Khatchadourian *Hezbollah: A History of the "Party of God"* 31

¹⁴⁷ Idib 34

Amal at this period was losing supporters to Hezbollah which created even more tensions as both parties were in direct competition to lead the Shia community in Lebanon. The loss of support among Amal circles can be partly blamed on Amal's leadership. Firstly, Amal had yet to fight the Israeli which now occupied most of south Lebanon. Amal leadership also supported UN Resolution 425 which gave Israel the right to ensure the country security, this meant that Amal de-facto accepted Israel right to exist. Hezbollah on the other hand vehemently denied the legitimacy of Israel and called for a defensive jihad against Israel.¹⁴⁸

Secondly Amal faced a significant number of criticisms from its supporters for participating in the War of the Camps, a sub conflict in the Lebanese Civil War that pitted Amal and its allies including Syria and leftist factions against the PLO. Because of their role Amal suffered from a great deal of defections to Hezbollah who despite lending support to fedayeen remained neutral.¹⁴⁹

Final source of tension was Hezbollah terrorism and kidnaping campaign which Amal and Syria did not approve of. Berri tried to mediate with Hezbollah to release some of the western hostages, for which he faced criticism from Hezbollah for trying to be mediator. The final straw came in February 1988 after the kidnapping of colonel William R. Higgins after the colonel left a meeting with an Amal leader. This was seen as slight and a challenge against Amal one which left them no other option but to respond starting the war between Hezbollah and Amal.

The war was called war of the brothers, since it pitted Shiites against Shiites sometimes literally splitting families between Hezbollah and Amal supporters. Hezbollah was forced to withdraw from South Lebanon and reassert themselves in Beirut, although later able to re-enter southern Lebanon and retake some of the areas they lost.

Both sides actively used propaganda and psychological warfare against each other. Berri accused Hezbollah of using Nazi tactics and they in turn called Berri "the butcherer of Shias". It's unknown how many died in this war, but the violence was so significant that even Iranian leadership criticized both sides. Amal who previously had fought in most battles in the civil war while Hezbollah remaining for the most part neutral was ill equipped to face a new front against Hezbollah which led to them gaining the upper hand in the war, Amal also lost three leaders which left it in a weakened state. The war of the brothers was one of the last conflicts

¹⁴⁸ Idib 35-36

¹⁴⁹ Idib 33-34

in the civil war. On November 1989 Hezbollah and Amal under the auspices of Iran and Syrian signed a peace treaty, despite the losses suffered during this war Hezbollah emerged stronger.¹⁵⁰

The Lebanese Civil War ended with the signing of the Taif accord in 1991. The accord saw Lebanese sectarian order further cemented, but the warring militias now disarmed and joined the Lebanese political system. Syria occupied half of Lebanon except for Beirut and South Lebanon which was under the occupation of Israel. Syrian occupation was justified by that the country had a special interest in Lebanon and protecting rest of Lebanon from further Israeli attack while Israel's justification was to protect Israel northern borders from further attacks and protecting their Lebanese south Lebanon army allies.

While all the militias agreed to disarm and become part of the Lebanese army Hezbollah was the exception. Under the Leadership of Abbas Al Moussavi the Party refused to disarm citing that no Hezbollah fighter would be under the leadership of Christian officers, and more importantly Hezbollah wanted to continue the fight against the IDF until no Lebanese territory was under Israeli and SLA occupation.¹⁵¹

Post Taif agreement Hezbollah was in a much stronger position than before backed by both Iran and Syria. Hezbollah was also the only group still able to confront the Israeli occupation which gave them a significant among the Lebanese and Palestinian population. Hezbollah during the 90's entered what can be described as a period of de-radicalization from the extremist Muslim interpretation,

Hezbollah faced its first dilemma after the death of Khomeini, since Hezbollah's relationship was stronger with office of the Supreme guide rather than the president of Iran. This made Hezbollah leadership anxious if the Iranian government without the Khomeini would distance themselves from Hezbollah. According to Nasrallah there were even anxiety of a second revolution in Iran, Hezbollah's anxiety about Iran were however not unfounded, the new Iranian government under president Rafsanjani worked to bring Iran out of Isolation by establishing diplomatic ties with other countries like Lebanon. This meant that Hezbollah hostility to the Lebanese government could no longer be supported by Iran. Syria protectorate over Lebanon further put pressure on Hezbollah to join the political system. Thirdly by the

¹⁵⁰ Idib 35-36

¹⁵¹ Idib 38

end of the civil war it was becoming more apparent that installing an Islamic government by force was unattainable.¹⁵²

To avoid marginalization Hezbollah accepted the principles of Taif agreement under the understanding that Hezbollah would use their arms to resist the Israeli occupation. The leadership also decided to enter the Lebanese parliamentary election of 1992. The decision to participate in the election was rationalized that Hezbollah needed to represent the Shia in Lebanon and this decision would help the resistance activities by gaining legal validity. Hezbollah decision enjoyed support from both Fadlallah and the new Ayatollah Khamenei, however it did not come without its fair share of criticism from hardliner headed by the former Hezbollah leader Tufaily.

The results of the elections went favorably for Hezbollah winning them 12 seats. They used their new position in government by becoming an opposition party against the policies of Rafik El Hariri which were centered around Neo-liberal policy and support of normalization with Israel. However, Hezbollah worked to preserve the Taif agreement.¹⁵³

With Hezbollah no longer having establishment of Lebanese Islamic republic as an objective they focused all its military strength on the occupying Israeli forces. Their strategy to defeat Israel was to cause enough casualties to the IDF that the Israeli public couldn't handle. Hezbollah was also able to build a quiet sophisticated resistance network allegedly supervised and planed by Imad Mughniyeh.¹⁵⁴

Hezbollah initial strategy was to use Katsuya rockets as a standoff weapon, bombarding northern Israel whenever IDF attacked targets behind the blue line or civilian targets. These rocket attacks increased in effectiveness as Hezbollah gained more experience using these rockets. In Israel the rockets attack causing damage both in terms of lives and money. In response to these attack IDF would take punitive actions against Lebanese government and civilians and to turn public opinion against Hezbollah. Two operation accountabilities in 1993 grapes of wrath in 1996. The latter operation caused the infamous qana massacre. These actions however had the opposite effect. The extensive civilian damage only swelled Hezbollah support.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Daher, *Hezbollah Mobilization and Power* 79

¹⁵³ Idib 82

¹⁵⁴ Ivar Gabrielsen, "The Evolution of Hezbollah Strategy and Military Performance, 1982-2006" *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 25: 263-264

¹⁵⁵ Idib 260

The extensive civilian casualties on both sides pushed the two sides to come to an understanding that both needed to avoid attacking civilian targets. This understanding came to be known as the “rules of the game”.

Apart from the rockets attack Hezbollah used guerrilla warfare against Israeli and SLA, hit and run tactics and suicide attacks. Hezbollah specially targeted SLA troops since their moral, training and equipment was lower than their IDF colleague Hezbollah fighters often raided bases run by the SLA. Eventually Hezbollah attack also negatively affected IDF moral to the point that defections became a problem for the IDF. Hezbollah use of suicide bombings faded out in favor of IED attack considering that planting these bombs was much easier for them and much harder to detect than a suicide bomber. The IED tactic forced IDF troops to be on constant alert which put a heavy toll on the soldier’s wellbeing.

Hezbollah also made great use of propaganda and psychological warfare, each Hezbollah attack was filmed by Hezbollah members and published on their news channel giving the Lebanese and the Israeli public a glimpse into the war. For the Lebanese this footage showed Hezbollah as an effective and professional force it also chartered the view of IDF being a professional force, for the Israeli public the footage helped to turn Israeli public view against the war. SLA troops many of them Shias forced into service, were given the option of surrender and receive amnesty or face death. Many SLA troops chose the former.¹⁵⁶

Hezbollah effective of these tactics were successful, Israeli public by the end of the 90’s was calling for the end of the occupation the new prime minister Ehud Barrack made it his campaign promise to end the war in Lebanon. Following his election in 2000 IDF began to pull out of Lebanon, their plan was to organize an orderly withdrawal and leave the SLA in charge of the security zone. However, the pull out caused the SLA to rapidly collapse and the withdrawal resembled less of an orderly pull out and more like a mad dash to the border.

Israel withdrawal was seen as a colossal victory for Hezbollah, as this was the first time a Muslim army had defeated Israel and taken back occupied territory. The footage of Lebanese people tearing apart barbed wire and entering the infamous Khiam prison. This launched Hezbollah from an obscure terrorist group into stardom in Lebanon and the Arab world.

Lebanon was free from any foreign occupier apart from Syria who Hezbollah did not consider an enemy and a small part of disputed territory called the Sheeba farm whom both Lebanon and Israel considered their sovereign territory. Hezbollah used the occupied Sheeba farms to

¹⁵⁶ Idib 259

avoid disarmament, as they considered it an occupied territory and as they viewed themselves as resistance group to liberate all of Lebanon disarming was not an option.

Hezbollah also ran a quasi-state within South Lebanon. However unlike PFLP and other Palestinian groups Hezbollah was well liked by the inhabitants who saw them as liberators while the Palestinians had a troubled relationship with these inhabitants. Furthermore, Hezbollah worked to improve the condition of South Lebanon who was mainly a poor area of Lebanon this cemented Hezbollah strong relationship with south Lebanon.

Following the end of Israel's occupation, Hezbollah faced criticism from two sources, Hezbollah no longer had a reason to keep their arms since Israel no longer occupied Lebanon therefore must disarm like all the other parties did following the Taif agreement, secondly their close relationship with the occupying Syrian government resulted in some Lebanese seeing Hezbollah as an extension of the Syrian regime.

Hezbollah's response to the first criticisms is that despite Israel leaving southern Lebanon there was still a disputed area that was controlled by Israel called the Sheeba farms, additionally Hezbollah arms were needed in the case Israel invaded Lebanon again, this reasoning was also used to deny LAF entry into southern Lebanon, since according to them only Hezbollah asymmetric forces could resist Israeli incursions.¹⁵⁷

The Syrian occupation and control of Lebanon also became a source of criticism. The Syrian regime had complete control over the Lebanese government most cabinet ministers and politicians had to be approved by Syria, Hezbollah because of its close relationship with the Syrian government was seen as tool for the Syrian government.

Lebanese Anti-Syria politicians and activist started to better organize and coordinate their efforts. They were further emboldened in 2004 when Syria wanted to extend the pro-Syrian president of Lebanon Emile Lahoud term by three years. The Lebanese president's conduct during his term also fuel anti Syrian sentiment, Lahoud used his presidential powers to block any cabinets proposals that Syria did not support which had the effect of the Lebanese government becoming more handicap.¹⁵⁸

The anti-Syria movement in Lebanon in 2004 turned into a coalition of political parties opposing Syria's influence, most significant part of that coalitions was Walid Jumblatt leader of the progressive socialist party several Christian parties and Rafik al Hariri of the

¹⁵⁷ Daher, *Hezbollah Mobilization and Power* 175

¹⁵⁸ *ibid* 179

progressive party who was at the time the most prominent and influential leader of the coalition. The coalition also received political support from the west and UN which started to apply pressure Hezbollah

Syria in order to quell the growing Lebanese independence movement set out on a series of assassinations against Lebanese journalist, activist and politicians who were critical of Syria, which culminated in the assassination of Rafik Al Hariri. Syria had hoped that Hariri gone would quell the movement but instead Hariri became a martyr and the anti-Syria movement's ranks swelled and turned into a revolution, demonstration and fierce confrontation against the occupation forces became a daily occurrence. Syria no longer able to keep control over Lebanon and eager to avoid armed confrontation with anti-Syrian demonstrators saw no other option than to pull out of Lebanon on fifth of March 2005 Assad announced that Syria would withdraw out of Lebanon.¹⁵⁹

The withdrawal had immediate negative consequences for Hezbollah. The political and military cover and support under the Syrian government they enjoyed was now gone, public opinion and the political parties that resisted the Syrian occupation started to target Hezbollah, as they were the only one violating the Taif agreement by keeping an armed force, additionally threatening Hezbollah was that the international criminal courts opened an investigation on the assassination of Hariri which many believed Hezbollah had part in.¹⁶⁰

Despite the pressures, Hezbollah continued to enjoy widespread popularity in Lebanon particularly in the Shia community where the conflict with Amal has been mended and now both parties had an alliance. However much political pressure Hezbollah faced in the 2005 year, all this would be put-on hold with the outbreak of 2006 Lebanon war.

On July 12th, 2006, Hezbollah and Israel would once again go to war after Hezbollah cross border raid that killed 8 IDF soldiers and further kidnapped two soldiers, IDF attempted a rescue mission but failed Israeli air force and navy proceeded to bombard Lebanon, the short 33 days war became known as the July war.

From the onset the operation Hezbollah undertook what seemed like a random act of violence but tension between Hezbollah and Israel was significantly heightened prior to the war. Several clashes between them and Israel have occurred prior to the war.¹⁶¹ Additionally, Israel

¹⁵⁹ Ibid 184

¹⁶⁰ Ibid 188

¹⁶¹ Gabrielsen, "the Evolution of Hezbollah Strategy and Military Performance", 1982-2006 271-272

was eager to avenge their loss in Lebanon after enduring many taunts for the Hezbollah Leader, For Hezbollah their reasoning for undertaking this operation is to repeat the success form the similar 2004 operation,¹⁶² Also, march 14 alliance particularly from Kamal Jumblatt leader of the progressive party continued to undermine Hezbollah by claiming that Israel no longer constituted a threat to Lebanese sovereignty. Therefore, Hezbollah's role as a defense force against Israel were no longer relevant.¹⁶³ Hezbollah July operation was set out to prove to them that Hezbollah's arms was still relevant.

However, Hezbollah miscalculated Israel response, IDF air force following the operation launched air strikes against Lebanon's airports and roads leading to Syria. They also blockaded their ports effectively closing the entire country. Hezbollah's leadership soon realized that Israel was preparing for a full war on Lebanon with the aim of destruction of Hezbollah armed capabilities.¹⁶⁴

Israel likewise miscalculated just how well-prepared and dug in Hezbollah was in Lebanon. Israel initial strategy was using their significant air power to cripple Hezbollah, but after two days of airstrikes this proved to be fruitless as the airstrikes had little effect on the well-fortified Hezbollah bunkers. IDF leadership soon realized that a ground offensive was inevitable, and called their reservists back into duty and soon had 10,000 troops ready to pour into South Lebanon, IDF was hoping for a quick victory over Hezbollah but as it soon became apparent neither the ground invasion proved to be quick and easy.¹⁶⁵

Hezbollah strategy during the war was inflicting much casualties on the invading army as possible as the Hezbollah leadership believed that Israel no longer had the stomach for a long and costly war. To counter IDF air superiority they constructed several sophisticated tunnels and bunker system, invested heavily in missiles and rockets system and well trained fighters, this meant that Hezbollah no longer relayed on the same guerrilla warfare that Palestinian groups and themselves used in the 90's. in this war Hezbollah fought using both conventional warfare tactics and irregular warfare, this particular style is called hybrid warfare and Israel whom thought that they would be meeting irregular army.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Daher, Aurelie *Hezbollah Mobilization and Power* 201

¹⁶³ Ibid 197-198

¹⁶⁴ Farquhar, Scott C *Back to Basics: A Study of the Second Lebanon War and Operation CAST LEAD* (Kansas: combat studies institute press, 2009,) 7

¹⁶⁵ Ibid 10-11

¹⁶⁶ Ibid 60

IDF was woefully unprepared to fight Hezbollah, unable to fully secure the south with several border towns and villages still in Hezbollah control, neither were they able to reduce Hezbollah missiles barrage into Israel. Their destructive bombing on Lebanon resulted in mostly civilian casualties which also increased international and internal pressure on Israel to cease their destructive campaign. While Hezbollah on the other hand enjoyed praise and support from the Palestinians and the rest of the Muslim world nevertheless, they also experienced pressure to end the war after suffering casualties following the fighting additionally Hezbollah never planned for an all-out war with Israel and only wanted a hostage exchange.¹⁶⁷

After 33 days of fighting the two warring sides agreed to UNSC resolution 1701 which called for the withdrawal of both sides from the south and the introduction of UN and Lebanese army units into that area. However, Hezbollah continued to maintain a significant presence in the border area. Israel saw this short war as a failure while Hezbollah and their supporters celebrated their victory, most of Lebanon was left in ruins and many Lebanese questioned why a paramilitary group was allowed to declare such a destructive war without the Lebanese government consent or knowledge.

Following the 2006 war Hezbollah enjoyed a significant rise in popularity in the Arab world. Sunni Islamist and secular Muslims alike celebrated Hezbollah and condemned the Israeli aggression, Palestinians likewise were inspired by Hezbollah achievements during this war who also praised Hezbollah. However, in Lebanon there was little cause for celebrations much of civilian infrastructure was left in ruins and many civilians were left dead, maimed or made refugees.¹⁶⁸

The following year however much of the anger coming from the Lebanese people was directed at the Lebanese government, who in an effort to raise funds to rebuild initiated a series of austerity measures, which set off a series of protests and strike. Hezbollah was initially hesitant to join the ongoing protests but as tensions between the government headed by prime minister Siniora and the March 8 alliance grew, Hezbollah along with their allies called for a general strike.¹⁶⁹

Tension between Hezbollah's March 8 alliance and March 14 alliance started to rise in 2007. The rising tension was related to the international tribunal into the Hariri assassination. If

¹⁶⁷ Ibid 216-217.

¹⁶⁸ Norton, *Hezbollah a Short History* 147-148.

¹⁶⁹ Daher, *Aurelie Hezbollah Mobilization and Power*, 227-229.

Hezbollah was found guilty it would severely weaken the organization. Nasrallah questioned the legitimacy of the Siniora government after several shia minister resigned, He called for the government to resign and a new cabinet to be formed. Which the march 14 government declined. March 8 camp in response called for a general strike in the heart of Beirut. With thousands of March 8 supporters responding to the call violence between the striking March 8 supporters and the March 14 supporters became an everyday occurrence, the violence between supporters of the two camps led many to believe that a new civil war was brewing.¹⁷⁰

In 2008 a year later tension between Mach 8 and March 14 eventually led to Hezbollah once again turning his guns at rival Lebanese parties, After Walid Jumblatt a prominent party leader allied with Hezbollah rival, raised the issue of camera surveillance directed at the main road from and to the Beirut international airport believed to be operated and used by Hezbollah, march 14 alliance eager to indirectly weaken Hezbollah military capabilities proposed a law regulating the installation of fiber optic cables which Hezbollah heavily relied on for military communication.¹⁷¹

Hezbollah militants in well-coordinated attack managed to take over most of Beirut, destroying much of their rivals' offices and other afflicted target including FPM media organization. The march 14 parties stood no chance against the well-trained militia apart from Walid Jumblatt's own militiamen. The Lebanese army also were unable to restore order or face the attacking militias. In the end 80 people laid dead and the government was forced to concede.¹⁷²

PFLP in contrast with Hezbollah were a fringe leftist faction within Palestinian politics who became more marginalized as time moved on unable to take any actions against the dominant Fatah or Hamas while Hezbollah became a major player both politically and militarily in Lebanon.

On the 17 December 2010 a Tunisian man set himself on fire outside a government building in Tunis. His action set off a chain of protests and riots in the Arab countries. Most of the protester had a common goal of ending the authoritarian governments that have been ruling these countries. Initially most of the protest were peaceful and were able to achieve their goals like in Tunis and to a certain extent Egypt. But other countries the government either quelled

¹⁷⁰ Ibid 230-232

¹⁷¹ Ibid 239

¹⁷² Ibid 241-243

the protests or it developed into a civil war, where the conflict also took on a sectarian character.

Hezbollah initially praised the popular protests when they were contained to Egypt, Tunis, and Libya as most of the people in the middle east saw these popular uprisings in a positive light.¹⁷³ But when protest spread to their Syrian ally Hezbollah rhetoric changed, fearing that they could lose an important ally in region called for Syrians to support the president Bashar Al-Assad.¹⁷⁴

In Syria the heavy handed response from the Syrian government against the protesters, prompted the protesters to take up arms against the government, which in turn sent in the army to quell the uprising.¹⁷⁵ But the Syrian army suffered heavily from defections and mutiny, many of the defectors join the ranks of the anti-government forces known as the free Syrian army and by 2012 the situation for Assad was looking very grim, most of the county was in the hands of the FSA, most nations have cut ties with him additionally the FSA was now receiving funding, training and arms from the west and gulf countries. It was becoming increasingly apparent that Assad would meet the same fate as Gaddafi.

The Hezbollah leadership soon realized that if their Syrian ally was to survive, they'll have to get militarily involved. The exact date when Hezbollah entered Syria is unknown but report of Hezbollah advisors in Syrian already started to appear in late 2012 along with Iranian advisors. The Syrian army even with Iranian and Hezbollah advisors was ill equipped to take back the lost territory or keep control over regime territory.¹⁷⁶

Hezbollah fighters proved themselves valuable ally for the Syrian regime. Better trained with more combat experience than their Syrian counterpart, their experienced light infantry was better equipped to handle the insurgency type warfare than the mechanized Syrian units. Initially Hezbollah focus was on securing areas close to the Lebanese border thus the first objective was retaking the Qusayr border town which they achieved within four weeks.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Hassan Nasrallah speech Feb 07, 2011. <https://www.shiatv.net/video/7888651490d4b3798ec7>

¹⁷⁴ Yara Bayoumy "Lebanon's Hezbollah Says Most Syrians Back Assad" Reuter, 25 May 2011
<https://www.reuters.com/article/cnews-us-hezbollah-syria-idCATRE74O61Y20110525>

¹⁷⁵ Ali, Nour «Syrian protests and state violence expected to escalate during Ramadan» The Gardian 29 Jul 2011,
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/29/syria-protests-violence-escalate-ramadan>

¹⁷⁶ Tokmajyan, Armenak *Hezbollah's Military Intervention in Syria Political choice or religious obligation?* Des, 14 Approaching Religion 4(2):105-12 105-106

¹⁷⁷ Levitt, Matthew, Aaron Y.Zelin *Hezbollah Gambit In Syria* Combatin terrorism Center Syria Special Issue Volume 6 Issue 8 17
<https://ctc.usma.edu/the-battle-for-qusayr-how-the-syrian-regime-and-hizb-allah-tipped-the-balance/>

Hezbollah involvement in the war was met by widespread criticism from both Lebanese and citizen and most Arab countries any goodwill Hezbollah had built between them and the Arab world was now gone.¹⁷⁸ In Tripoli armed gangs sympathetic to Syrian revolution openly clashed with the Lebanese government, in Sidon protest Hezbollah organized by the radical cleric Ahamad al Asir.¹⁷⁹

During 2011 AL Qaeda had established itself in Syria to fight the regime and Hezbollah.¹⁸⁰ While the Jihadist factions gave the rebels a much need edge over the regime, it also gave Hezbollah a just cause for their involvement in the War. Hezbollah claimed that the rebels were “takfiris” a term denoting a Muslim which calls fellow muslim infidel, and that Hezbollah was simply fighting to protect Shia Muslims from the takfiri terrorist

In Lebanon the consequences of the Syrian civil war were already being felt sectarian clashes in the city of Tripoli between Sunni and Alawite neighborhood but more worryingly was the encroachment of Syrian rebels inside of Lebanese territory. The most serious incident occurred when al Nusra affiliated rebels attacked the village of Aarsal and kidnapped 40 police officers.¹⁸¹ Salafist militias also started a series of suicide bombings against Hezbollah controlled areas in Lebanon.¹⁸²

On 2015 Russian forces arrived in Syria to help the pro government forces.¹⁸³ Assad and his allies now back by the Russian air force were quickly able to take back much of the country from the rebels, the intra rebels’ conflict also weakened the rebels which Assad was able to use to his advantage.¹⁸⁴

The Syrian government force offensive soon ran into major obstacles when they ran into the Turkish backed Free Syrian Army in northeast Syria and HTS Idlib. The government was

¹⁷⁸ Ibid 14-15

¹⁷⁹ Amro, Anwar “*Salafist Imam Ahmed al-Assir, Lebanon’s most wanted*” France 24 18, July 2015
<https://www.france24.com/en/20150818-fall-salafist-iman-ahmed-al-assir-lebanon-most-wanted>

¹⁸⁰ Lister, Charles, *Profiling Jabhat Al-Nusra* The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World Analysis Paper No. 24, July 2016 7

¹⁸¹ Ghanem, Esperance *When will Lebanon get their kidnapped soldiers back?* Al-Monitor 15 October 2015
<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2015/10/lebanon-kidnapped-soldiers-families.html>

¹⁸² Botelho, Greg. Et al *Beirut suicide bombings kill 43; suspect claims ISIS sent attackers* 16 novmeber 2015

¹⁸³ Quinn, Ben «Russia’s military action in Syria

¹⁸⁴ Lund, Aaron «Syrian war: Understanding Idlib’s rebel factions» The New Humanitarian 3 september 2018
<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2018/09/03/syrian-war-understanding-idlib-s-rebel-factions>

unable to retake these rebel parts without provoking a response from Turkey or taking heavy casualties by recapturing Idlib.¹⁸⁵

The government forces faced the same issue when dealing with Kurdish forces who were backed by the US and western forces, additionally the Kurdish forces control included most of Syria's oil resources depriving the government of much needed resources.

Hezbollah was eventually able to secure Lebanon from the rebels and terrorist forces and keep Assad government in power. But the toll they had to pay was very heavy, Hezbollah carefully constructed an image of itself as a just Islamic resistance was also in shatters. Most Sunni Muslims who held a favorable view on Hezbollah now view Hezbollah as a sectarian militia fighting for a dictator. The resistance image that Hezbollah wanted people to associate them with it became increasingly impossible, most viewed Hezbollah as a sectarian militia proxy controlled by Iran, even more damaging to the organization was the casualties Hezbollah received during the war which were in the thousands including several experienced high-level commanders who got assassinated by Israeli airstrikes.¹⁸⁶

PFLP interestingly took the same stance as Hezbollah supporting the Syrian government- This can be explained by PFLP and Iran along with Hezbollah developing a strong relationship. However, PFLP's stance only came in as words of support rather than sending fighters to aid their allies like Hezbollah did this is related to PFLP not having the strength to aid militarily in the Syrian Civil War.¹⁸⁷

Conclusion

Since Hezbollah's establishment in the 80's, the group has seen a meteoric rise from a small extremist group to a major political party with armed capabilities rivaling most small countries' militaries, as well as establishing major welfare institutions that thousands of Lebanese rely on. In contrast with PFLP which is older and Palestinian which is today still fighting for relevancy in the age where most Palestinian militants belong to Islamist organizations. For Hezbollah their key to this growth is the support of their key ally Iran. PFLP lack any significant support from other countries. While PFLP have succeeded in avoiding getting to

¹⁸⁵ Karam, Zeina «Why Syria's Assad is setting his sight on Idlib» PBS news hour 10, May, 2019 <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/why-syrias-assad-is-setting-his-sights-on-idlib>

¹⁸⁶ Elkayam, Ran *Estimate of Hezbollah's fatalities during the Syrian civil war and the conclusions arising from the analysis of their identity* «The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 21, february, 2019) 8 <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/estimate-hezbollahs-fatalities-syrian-civil-war-conclusions-arising-analysis-identity/>

¹⁸⁷ Adnan Abu Amer «How do Palestinians see the Syrian war?» Al-Jazeera (20 oct. 2018) <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/10/20/how-do-palestinians-see-the-syrian-war>

draw into other conflicts. Hezbollah have been an active participant in the Saudi Iranian proxy war and the increasingly sectarian Civil war in Syria to point that confronting Israel is no longer on Hezbollah's agenda.

4. Emergence of radical movements in the Levant

Throughout Hezbollah and PFLP histories both have experienced great transformations and faced different and similar challenges. While PFLP is fading into obscurity Hezbollah has become one of the strongest non state actors. However, despite their different trajectory and both following contrasting world views and ideology they have many historical similarities.

Before Hezbollah and PFLP existed both movements enjoyed from the works of earlier political mobilization movements. For the PFLP Marxism was already an established movement in the Middle east thanks to the efforts of earlier Marxist and other leftist intellectuals. Leftism in the middle east became a popular ideology within the Arab world. These early Arab Marxist intellectuals were Iraqi Jewish writer Sami Michael, Fuad Nasser who founded the first Palestinian Leftist newspaper Al-Itihad in 1944.¹⁸⁸ In the Arab world communist parties were already being establish years before PFLP and DPFLP. However, most of Arab Marxist parties experienced heavy crackdown from Arab governments, further harming Arab Marxism. Within Palestinian context Marxism was introduced in Palestine and developed by both Jewish and Arab intellectuals.

The PFLP and other Arab Marxist movement belongs to the “new left” a resurgence of leftist movements as a result of Nasserism failure to create an untied pan Arabist front against the west.¹⁸⁹ While ANM had leftist trends within their movement they were a strictly Nasserist and a pan Arabist organization. However, when the leaders of ANM dissolved the organization, they created the PFLP and adopted the works of earlier Marxist activist to mobilize the Arabs and the Palestinians under the banner of Marxism. PFLP also played a big part in further developing Marxism in the Arab world, the work of the organization's spokesman Ghassan Kanafani and other members had a great impact on Arab leftist, PFLP also was one of the biggest Palestinian leftist organizations within the Palestinian national

¹⁸⁸ Hana Morgenstern Beating Hearts: Arab Marxism, Anti-colonialism and Literatures of Coexistence in Palestine/Israel, 1944–60. In *The Arab Lefts: Histories and Legacies, 1950s–1970s* edited by Laure Guirguis (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020) 39-41.

¹⁸⁹ Tareq Y. Ismael *the Arab Left* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000) 91-94 120.

movement and was one of the leading Marxist organizations in mobilizing the Palestinians leftist.¹⁹⁰

Unlike Marxism Hezbollah's distinct Shia ideology was new to Lebanon and Middle East. In the late 60's to the early 70's Shia Islamism was being developed into a coherent ideology and exported to Lebanon by Lebanese Shia clerics. However, the result of this was the Amal movement a Shia secular movement which politically mobilized the Shiites towards equality in Lebanon long before Hezbollah came. Additionally, this early mobilization of Shiites by Amal reduced the possibility of leftist movement gaining momentum in the Lebanese Shiite community, as the Lebanese Shiites who were disenfranchised and felt downtrodden would make excellent breeding ground for leftist movements. Amal later lost much of its momentum because of their actions during the civil war and as a result of increased Islamic radicalism in the Shiite community resulted in Hezbollah gaining more momentum.

When Hezbollah entered the Lebanese Civil War, Islamism before and during the civil war period was virtually non-existent. However, the works of Shia clerics particularly Ragheed Harb, Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah and Abbas Al Musawi brought radical Shia Islamism to Lebanon, which radicalized the Shia Lebanese community inside of Lebanon, many of whom were already disillusioned by Amal, evident by the creation of Islamic Amal an alternative to the movement which later became part of Hezbollah.¹⁹¹

However, one of the main similarities between the establishment of PFLP and Hezbollah was that both organizations were born out of an increased radicalism as result of disillusionment by the previous movements to deliver on what they had promised. Arab states failed to confront Israel and save the Palestinian therefore Palestinian saw it fit to take matter in their own hands and further radicalized the Palestinians which resulted in PFLP. Amal wouldn't confront the Israeli occupation and defend the Shiites from life under occupation further pushing them in the arms of Hezbollah.

Both groups used violence and terrorism as a mean to achieve their goals. For Hezbollah that goal was the removal of MNF and IDF/SLA from South Lebanon and for PFLP the end of Israeli occupation. However PFLP also used it as a tactic to gain exposure in radical movement and international press on the Palestinian suffering. While Hezbollah took

¹⁹⁰ Orit Bashkin, Unforgettable Radicalism: Al-Ittihad 's Words in Hebrew Novels in *The Arab Lefts: Histories and Legacies, 1950s–1970s* edited by Laure Guirguis (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020) 28

¹⁹¹ Joseph Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's ideologies* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006) 33-35

precaution when using terror tactics especially their suicide campaign in the 80's as Hezbollah understood that this kind of action would draw more negative attention toward the group.

However, as use of suicide bombings became a staple of both Hamas and Hezbollah, they were not the ones who used it first in fact PFLP had the first recorded suicide attack in Israel.¹⁹² This meant that suicide bombing specially ones that target civilians were not a strictly Islamist terrorist group tactic but used by several radical groups to achieve political change. Despite PFLP being the first ones to use suicide bombings. Hezbollah further innovated this tactic by multiplying its effectiveness when they used truck laden suicide attacks. Furthermore, Hezbollah chose their targets more wisely by attacking critical infrastructure belonging to their enemies such as embassies and barracks where the enemy death toll would be much more severe.

Hezbollah hijacking targets were much more refined than PFLP rather than only hijacking passengers planes the group targeted people who could provide Hezbollah with valuable resources like their kidnaping of colonel William R. Higgins and William James Buckley CIA station chief in Beirut both provided valuable intel to Hezbollah.

PFLP use of terrorism had short term goals and less impactful than Hezbollah who used this tactic to achieve a wider goal and generally better planned and executed than the latter. Additionally, Hezbollah at the height of their terrorist activities used proxy groups in some of their attacks in order to reduce the response from their adversary when they were still a small organization. Unlike PFLP who openly took credits for their attacks.

Another major difference between Hezbollah and PFLP use of violence was that Hezbollah used their arms against political rivals. PFLP in late sixties to the late seventies were both rivals within the PLO. PFLP and Fatah competed for recruits and popularity and their rivalry was also based on both ideological differences and strategic disagreement. However, a PFLP Fatah war never occurred likely because both organizations worked within the PLO where both had to work together within the organization framework. This gave PFLP the option to challenge Fatah politically rather than militarily additionally both parties had to face common enemies which made infighting even more unlikely as both parties needed to use all their strength against their common enemy. As both parties had to compete with each other for popularity attacking the other party would lead Palestinians to view them in a negative light and support to the attacked party. PFLP also would likely never be able to gain the upper

¹⁹² Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State* (Oxford, Oxford university Press, 1999) 348

hand against Fatah in a fight as they were much stronger than PFLP neither any other leftist party was interested in fighting Fatah.

In Lebanon the factor that prevented a confrontation between Fatah and PFLP were not present between Hezbollah and Amal. Firstly there were no umbrella organization to coordinate and cooperate between the two Shiite factions the lack of communication and cooperation between these two coupled with both fighting for different goals led to increased animosity and tensions between the two groups. While the PLO task was the sole representative of the Palestinians therefore PFLP and Fatah neither had to claim as the sole representative of Palestinians but rather had to work within the governmental body like any other Political party.

For Amal and Hezbollah, the sectarian system in Lebanon meant that it was vital for one of them to dominate the other in order to claim to be the sole representative of Shiite Lebanese. Secondly there were outside factors that contributed to the outbreak of “the war of brothers” Syria who wished to exert greater control over Lebanon by controlling the various warring factions including Amal could not tolerate Hezbollah overthrowing Lebanon’s government or their kidnapping of foreigners specially US embassy personnel. The US government was putting pressure on Syria to deal with Hezbollah and even accusing them of being behind some of the kidnappings. While Iran backed Hezbollah to a lesser degree than Syria. For the PFLP and Fatah there were foreign nation backing each group however majority of other’s nation support was directed at PLO rather than an individual faction.

When both organizations were established, it was inside states where the government had weak control. Lebanon was in the middle of a civil war and Jordan had Palestinian faction that controlled many areas where the Jordanian government had no control. Both organizations were able to grow out of the lack of governmental control in these two countries. Both tried to challenge the weak governments with PFLP attempted overthrow of Jordanian monarchy and Hezbollah’s hostility toward the Lebanese government.

PFLP motivation to overthrow the Jordanian government was that the Jordan was monarchy that was controlled by western imperialist government that needed to be replaced with a communist anti-imperialist state. However, there was also a strategic motive to overthrow the Jordanian monarchy. PFLP hoped to create a situation like the war in Vietnam where North Vietnam directly supported the communists against USA and South Vietnam. If PFLP succeeded in overthrowing the government it would create a place where Palestinian

revolutionary could foster and support Palestinian resistance against Israel, Jordan would also be the place where they could gather strength and attack Israel.¹⁹³ After the expulsion of Palestinian factions PFLP along with PLO attempted the same with more success inside South Lebanon which came under de facto rule of Palestinian factions, from there they launched several attacks against Israel until the 1982 war.

Hezbollah also had the overthrow of Lebanese government as one of their main objectives, but this was later abandoned in favor of joining the government after the end of the civil war. Fighting Israeli occupation was still their main objective. Hezbollah similarly to PFLP also understood the importance of controlling and having hegemony over a territory to confront Israel. Hezbollah replaced the PFLP and PLO in South Lebanon. However, before they could completely control south Lebanon, they needed to expel IDF and SLA. This was achieved by building resistance networks inside the security zone. This was the first instance of Hezbollah reaching similar results as the Vietnam war entrenching themselves in South Lebanon where they waged a guerrilla war against the Israeli occupation and gathering strength with impunity behind the security zone. However, after the collapse of the Israeli security zone Hezbollah was able to emulate the Vietnam experience in south Lebanon where Hezbollah controlled most of south Lebanon specially the border area which they controlled as if it was their own state, in these areas Hezbollah build up an impressive defense network of bunkers, tunnels and ammunition dumps and training grounds. The militarization of the south by Hezbollah greatly served in the 2006 Lebanon where Israel offensive was unable to break through Hezbollah defenses.

Unlike the PFLP and PLO who were unable to successfully defend their areas against Israel One reason behind PFLP's failures in 1982 was that Palestinians were not united into one faction where Palestinian fighters would be united under one command. Furthermore, Palestinian factions had to not only defend themselves from the IDF but also the other Lebanese factions who wanted them expelled from Lebanon and many of the anti-Palestinian groups allied themselves with Israel. Hostility towards the Palestinian factions was not only coming from Lebanese militias but also Lebanese who lived under Palestinian in Southern Lebanon. Hezbollah on the other hand enjoyed popular support from the population in Southern Lebanon. Hezbollah during the 2006 war was also better armed with more modern weaponry and better trained than the Palestinian faction including the PFLP.

¹⁹³ Leopardi, *the Palestinian Left and Its Decline* 16-18.

PFLP suffered from several splits during their early years this problem did not occur within the ranks of Hezbollah despite them also being established after several groups merging. This might be explained by PFLP's slowness in adopting Marxism as their official ideology. Similarly to their predecessor PFLP also suffered from internal disputes between rightist factions represented by the older guard including George Habash and the lefties faction made up from the younger guard who wanted Marxism as their official ideology and guiding principle as a result the dissatisfied members formed the DPLFP. However, after Habash adopted Marxism as its official ideology had little effect on curbing the split now he drew criticism from the old guard who were more willing to act rather than discuss Marxist theory.¹⁹⁴ Hezbollah despite being made up of various groups did not suffer these problems mainly because their ideological principles were already established before the organization itself. Furthermore, the split between old guard and new guard did not occur since majority of Hezbollah leaders were clerics and the younger members was made up of devout Muslims who traditionally respected their elder clerics.

The lack of cohesion among PFLP members can also be partly blamed on Habash himself as he failed to assert himself as a strong leader inside his organization and frequently drew criticism from his comrades.¹⁹⁵ Additionally Habash also spent much of his time absent from the organization due to various health issues, prison in Syria and abroad travels this meant that PFLP during this crucial period lacked the Leadership it needs to be a cohesive and strong organization.¹⁹⁶ Hezbollah leadership despite early assassination by Israel managed to keep strong organizational cohesion by having effective leadership who also were effective with cultivating a cult of personality.

PFLP and Hezbollah also went through a similar process of institutionalization where both eventually became less radical and revolutionary and more pragmatic. Hezbollah's institutionalization process can be pinpointed in the early 90's when they decided to join the government. PFLP's process started after their expulsion from Lebanon, where they along with much of the PLO lost much of their power, Arafat started to prioritize diplomacy rather than armed campaign. PFLP's effort through much of the post Beirut stage was to hamper Arafat diplomacy campaign, PFLP along with other Palestinian organizations attempted to form a rejectionist coalition against Arafat peace effort.¹⁹⁷ PFLP also built relations with the

¹⁹⁴ Yezid Sayigh *Armed Struggle and the Search for State* 260-272.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid 473.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid 416, 188.

¹⁹⁷ Leopardi, *The Palestinian Left and Its Decline* 31-33.

Syrian regime. eventually moving their headquarters to Damascus, the regime's motivation to support PFLP was to counter Arafat diplomatic relation with Egypt and Jordan. PFLP new relations to Syria was contradictory to their previous stance where regimes like Syria were nationalistic military regimes who would never prioritize the Palestinian cause.¹⁹⁸

However, they became much more moderate after the first and second intifada where PFLP eventually accepted and de facto recognized Israel. Although they still used violence against Israel including suicide bombings particularly during the second intifada. However, in the first intifada PFLP wanted extended the intifada in order to gain more leverage during Arafat's negotiations with Israel. During the second intifada PFLP tried to play as mediator between Fatah and Hamas, after the outbreak of hostilities between Fatah and Hamas they chose to side with Fatah and condemn Hamas. Despite PFLP still had the aim of further intensifying the Palestinian resistance they sided with Fatah because they still needed access to PNA institutions for financial support. This pragmatic decision indicates PFLP becoming an completely institutionalized organization devoid of their radical and revolutionary elements from the previous decade.

Hezbollah after the end of the civil war chose to enter Lebanese politics enrolling as Political party in the 1992 general election. This decision came after much internal debate and strife within Hezbollah additionally after the end of the civil war the organization faced pressure from both Iran and Lebanon to normalize and become a regular party. Their 1992 and later elections programmed reflects Hezbollah ideological changes where Islamic element such sharia law, Islamic governance and wilayat al faqih are absent while still maintaining some Muslim elements within their program such as the importance of religious education in public school and emphasizing that Lebanon is a Muslim Arab nation and that the educational curriculum should reflect this identity. The election programs always advocate for continued resistance against Israel and Western Imperialism, up until 2000's their program had the dismantlement of Lebanese sectarian governmental system a central point but later removed this point.¹⁹⁹

These changes within Hezbollah culminated in a new manifesto in 2009. This new manifest although retaining some Islamic elements and that Hezbollah still is an anti-Israeli/US resistance group had completely removed Wiliat al Faqih and establishing a Muslim government in Lebanon. These changes came after Hezbollah had participated in Lebanese

¹⁹⁸ Ibid 68

¹⁹⁹ Joseph Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents* (Leiden, Pallas Publications, 2011), 75-80.

political system for 18 years becoming more part of Lebanon's establishment. The new manifesto can be seen a Hezbollah decade long effort to reinvent itself as a national Islamic resistance for all Lebanese regardless of sect. however this doesn't necessarily mean that these changes reflect internal changes within Hezbollah as the internal organization is still Islamic and maintain the same ties it had with Iran since their establishment which indicates that Hezbollah internally still follows wilayat al faqih while not imposing this rule on Lebanese people.²⁰⁰

The major difference between PFLP's and Hezbollah institutionalization process was that Hezbollah proved to be more flexible, changing identity to suit the current political environment transforming themselves from Islamist organization to moderate Islamic paramilitary political party Hezbollah and still retaining their anti-western and Israeli character to channel these changes the Lebanese public they changed their manifesto and following a political program that was more acceptable to the Lebanese public.

PFLP on the other hand had difficult time during their own process because unlike Hezbollah they were unable to change their radical ideology to reflect the political reality. The PFLP found itself in. During the intifada period PFLP had become so tied up to PNA institutions that they were no longer able to present themselves as radical alternative to Fatah to attract Palestinians disillusioned by Fatah but at the same time PFLP did not fully commit itself to the peace process falling between rejections and accepting peace a position that only served to further marginalize the organization.

Both organizations use of violence at this period were significantly restrained. Particularly both seized their worldwide terrorism campaign either partially or completely. Hezbollah in contrast to PFLP still used their military force to fight both internal and external threat however this use was always justified that they were "protecting Lebanon". From 1992 till 2000 Hezbollah fought Israeli occupation. From 2000 till 2006 they launched raids against Israel with aim to both capture IDF soldiers and to free the Sheeba farms. This culminated in the July war with Israel. Hezbollah again justified their use of arms as fighting to free both imprisoned Lebanese citizen and liberating occupied Lebanese territories. The 2008 clashes was the first time since the civil war Hezbollah used their arms against the Lebanese public. However, their target during these clashes were constrained to rival political parties rather than the general public. This time Hezbollah chose to attack these rival parties because they

²⁰⁰ Ibid 141

threatened their security apparatus and Hezbollah responded by using their arms as show of strength. The last significant Hezbollah military mobilization was during the civil war in Syria. Again, Hezbollah justified entering the civil war to protect Lebanon from “takfiri terrorist”.

PFLP on the other hand used their arms during the first and second intifada, unlike Hezbollah who phased out using suicide bombings during the 90’s PFLP started to use this tactic during the second intifada. PFLP use of suicide bombings was related to their rivalry with Hamas who first started to use this tactic in OPT. During the first and second intifada PFLP only used their arms to get better leverage during the peace negotiations with Israel and they were using their arms after the outbreak of violence which they didn’t initiate. When all other Palestinian factions including Fatah were actively fighting against the IDF occupation. PFLP only followed suit with what other Palestinian factions were already doing, to avoid complete marginalization where other factions were seen as doing something to fight the occupation while PFLP did nothing. In the context of institutionalization PFLP lost their ability to use their arms independently of other Palestinian faction. Unlike Hezbollah who often were the ones who initiated the violence like in 2008 clashes and 2006 July war and can use their armed forces to deal with what they see as threats to their organizations, allies or Lebanon.

However, Hezbollah when using their armed force must always have a valid excuse to sell to their own supporters and the Lebanese public by either claiming that they are protecting Lebanon. This justification is often given to both Hezbollah supporter base and Lebanese public or by claiming that they are fighting against a Zionist plot to weaken Lebanon and Hezbollah. Often this justification is used to their own supporter base. A consequence of institutionalization Hezbollah could not attack their arch enemy USA, as the Lebanese government and US had strong relations. While Hezbollah could only criticize USA and fight them indirectly, they could not use military force against them like they did in the 80’s. Additionally their political and ideological rivals in Lebanon could no longer be dealt with using violence only when they threatened their armed forces is violence used by Hezbollah.

4.1 Main differences between Hezbollah and PFLP

Hezbollah after 80’s became both a dominant political party in Lebanon and their armed force rivals, while PFLP popularity declined significantly along with most leftist Palestinian organization. This part of the comparison will examine what factors led to Hezbollah gaining an upper hand while PFLP declining.

4.2 Military strength

First factor is military strength and victory in the field of battle. PFLP although fought against Israel and other enemies during the Jordanian and Lebanese civil war almost always emerged defeated while Hezbollah have after almost all their armed conflict emerged victorious. A reason for Hezbollah fighting more effectively than PFLP is their armament is more modern and stronger including their missiles and anti-tank armament which gave them a significant edge while facing the IDF in the 2000's South Lebanon conflict and 2006 July war Hezbollah. Their military capabilities were on full display during the 2006 war their anti-tank weaponry were effective against IDF Merkava tanks destroying several of these tanks while their missiles bombarded Israeli towns and cities Hezbollah missile system were used a standoff weapons and Hezbollah was able to adequately protect them from IDF airstrikes. Their arsenal also included advanced weaponry including anti-Ship and anti-air missiles these weapons were also used to strike an Israeli ship and bring down on of their helicopters. Hezbollah tunnel and bunker systems also proved a valuable addition to Hezbollah armed forces both giving their fighter cover and protection from IDF and storage to their weapons. The bunker was also used for defence and as command-and-control centres.

There is no accurate estimate on how many Hezbollah soldiers they have but it's generally understood that Hezbollah fighter numbers in the thousands, these fighters are divided between full time fighter and part time fighters²⁰¹ Hezbollah can recruit many fighters thanks to their effective support organization mainly their welfare institutions and scouts' organization. Many Lebanese Shias who relay on Hezbollah welfare institutions also end up joining them. Hezbollah during the 2000's conflict also tap into other sect in Lebanese population for recruitment during that conflict Hezbollah established the Lebanese resistance brigades made up of non-religious Shiites and all other Lebanese sects.²⁰²

Apart from military strength Hezbollah also have an advanced security apparatus including communications and monitoring systems, and their own intelligence service which collect

²⁰¹ Scott C. Farquhar *Back to Basics* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform,2013) 52

²⁰² Alessandria Masi Christian, Sunni And Shia: Meet Hezbollah's Non-Denominational Military Branch Defending Lebanon, Fighting In Syria *international business times* (11,04,15)

<https://www.ibtimes.com/christian-sunni-shia-meet-hezbollahs-non-denominational-military-branch-defending-2169257>

intel on their opponents even recruiting IDF personnel as spies and counterintelligence which have been able to score impressive hits on their rival's intelligence services.²⁰³

These factors led to Hezbollah being able to hold their own against IDF and the rebels in Syria while PFLP could only arm their fighter with basic rifles and RPG's. PFLP fighter training was also lacking in contrast to Hezbollah. PFLP were also unable to expand their military capabilities as previously stated the main reason for these Hezbollah had southern Lebanon as their own exclusive area where they could develop their armed forces without interference from Lebanese or Israeli government while PFLP attempted to achieve this in Jordan and Lebanon believing that establishing an area free of any other government control would be necessary to fight Israel effectively Hezbollah would prove them right. PFLP only had OPT where they could operate this would prove be an insufficient place for them as Israel had tight control there. This meant that PFLP only could use the weapon they could smuggle into the OPT and could not build an effective military like Hezbollah.

4.3 Ideology and leadership

Hampering the PFLP was their inability to recruit effectively as most Palestinians were inclined to join Fatah and later Hamas their lack of popularity within Palestinian is tied to that Marxism was never the dominant ideology within the Arab world and even within the Arab left most Arabs including Palestinians were more inclined to join other secular movements like the Baathist parties rather than a Marxist one. Additionally, in the late 80's secular parties began to suffer a decline whereas Islamist parties began to gain steam. Here Hezbollah's Islamic ideology played in Hezbollah favor and PFLP Marxism hampered PFLP popularity. Unlike Hezbollah who invested heavily in aid organizations where they later could reap the reward of their investment by gaining popularity and more recruits, PFLP never set up any aid organization which could have given them more popularity and aid them in spreading the ideology this would also help them gain more followers in the Palestinian refugee camps where poverty was rampant.

PFLP also have suffered from a certain disconnection between the leadership who largely were diaspora Palestinian and members who resided inside the OPT. The leadership who was seen old and out of touch with the realities on the ground and furthermore PFLP member

²⁰³ Greg Miller, Hezbollah damages CIA spy network in Lebanon *the Washington post* (21. Nov, 2011) https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/hezbollah-damages-cia-spy-network-in-lebanon/2011/11/21/gIQA5uCEjN_story.html

inside the OPT felt that they were being ignored in favour of the diaspora leadership which led to much resentment. Hezbollah obviously did not suffer from these issues as the leadership and the rest of the members were always in touch and close geographically.²⁰⁴

4.4 Ally-ship

The last factor that resulted in Hezbollah's rise in popularity and military power was their powerful ally Iran. Their relationship goes back since Hezbollah's establishment even helping establishing Hezbollah. Iran's aid to Hezbollah includes monetary aid, missiles, weapons, training, and military advisors from Iran's elite Quds force. Additionally, Hezbollah receives also help from the Syrian regime. Most likely Hezbollah could never reach the levels that it is today without the aid from Iran. A consequence of this aid and their ideological connection PFLP on the other hand had relations with South Yemen and the USSR as these countries followed the same ideology. While USSR relations were based on ideological similarities but unlike Iran and Hezbollah USSR only had diplomatic relations and even this was a shaky relationship²⁰⁵. With South Yemen is clearer there, they were allowed to set up bases and training camps. However, after the fall of South Yemen and USSR they were left with little support. Ideological similarity was not the only factor that determines if the PFLP established relations with that country since PFLP also established a HQ in Syria and occasionally and early into their establishment received arms from Egypt. However, the relations PFLP had with non-ideologically aligned countries was less stable than that between Iran and Hezbollah and usually only occasionally supported PFLP when it helps them further their own goals. The lack of a reliable and strong backer resulted in PFLP not being able to achieve the same level of success as Hezbollah.

However, PFLP also received substantial support from Libyan leader Qaddafi in both funds and arms they also benefited from the aid the PLO received from Arab countries however a major difference between how Hezbollah and PFLP use of funds was how they spent their money. Hezbollah heavily invested funds in social programs and in turn benefitted the PFLP only used their funds to pay wages to their own members while neglecting Palestinians this

²⁰⁴ Yezid Sayigh *Armed Struggle and the Search for State* 473

²⁰⁵ Ibid 304

resulted in PFLP losing out on a major source of support for their organization which they desperately needed.²⁰⁶

However, their luck would turn after Iran and Hezbollah started to support them both sending them arms and funds unfortunately for them Iran and Hezbollah backing was less than that that Iran was sending Hezbollah additionally sending arms and funds to the PFLP in the OPT was a more challenging task than sending them to Hezbollah in Lebanon as these had to go through Israel undetected.

This is perhaps the greatest reason why Hezbollah became such a strong military organization and popular political party while PFLP over the years crumpled into obscurity. If PFLP were able to find an effective partner then they could've effectively fought in their wars with Israel and effectively spread their ideology to the Palestinian masses however this was never the case.

5. Mass appeal.

Both Parties used Propaganda to spread their message with the aims of recruiting more followers in this section we will examine how Hezbollah and PFLP use of propaganda differ from each other.

PFLP media arm included many writers and intellectuals who published a great number of books, poetry and posters related to Palestinian culture and struggle, perhaps the most famous of these writers was PFLP's spokesman Ghassan Kanafani who became a prominent writer within Palestinian culture and national struggle.²⁰⁷ However, the books published by Kanafani had less to do with PFLP and national struggle and more with the struggle faced by the Palestinians.

Apart from books PFLP also ran their own newspaper Al Haddaf, a weekly Arabic newspaper based in Beirut and published in the Arab world and PFLP news bulletin in English targeting a western audience. In these papers the editors published news of their operations and their own view on world and middle east affairs. PFLP also published impressive and artistic propaganda posters often featuring Palestinian fighters. Al Haddaf served as both a tool for

²⁰⁶ Ibid 486, 491

²⁰⁷ Abdel Razzaq Takriti *The Arab Left: Histories and Legacies, 1950s–1970s* 260

PFLP to get their message across the Palestinian masses and as way to preserve and expand Palestinian culture.²⁰⁸

Hezbollah also had their own newspapers Al-Ahed. However their media arm expanded into radio and a television channel called Al Manar.²⁰⁹ Unlike PFLP Hezbollah was able to expand their media outreach by exploiting several mediums. Hezbollah also proved to be more media savvy than PFLP. As mentioned above Hezbollah always recorded their operations and published it on Al Manar often accompanied by Hezbollah propaganda songs or Nasheed (Nasheed are Islamic vocal music where Hezbollah often used musical instruments in these Nasheeds). These became powerful propaganda tools for Hezbollah. they also were able to change their propaganda in order to fit the transformation Hezbollah was going through in the 90's as an example their music changed from containing Islamic lyrics to more nationalistic lyric to sell to the Lebanese public that they were and Lebanese resistance movement.

As a testament to their media savviness during the 2006 July war Hezbollah propaganda music released during this period started to contain Arab nationalist lyrics to sell to the general Arab public an example is Hezbollah using old nationalist song by Abd al Halim Hafez with video of Hezbollah fighter in actions. Hezbollah also used propaganda to foster the culture of Martyrdom and resistance.²¹⁰ Hezbollah also successfully integrated their military operation with their propaganda operations, usually Hezbollah filmed all their operation for their propaganda purposes during the early stages of the 2006 war Hezbollah fighters hit an Israeli ship with a missile, at the same time Nasrallah was giving a televised speech and before ending his speech he directed his listeners to look out of their windows to see the burning Israeli ship. These propaganda strategies were Hezbollah efforts to shatter Israeli perceived military invulnerability in the eyes of Lebanese and Arab public.

Another stable of Hezbollah media strategy was the promotion of the culture of martyrdom. fallen Hezbollah martyr immortalized as heroes who sacrificed their life for the cause, interviews of Hezbollah fighters before their death were regularly released on Al-Manar. This helped to immunize their fallen fighters, for their supporters becoming a martyr was the highest honor their members could achieve, the culture of martyrdom helped them gaining more recruits and mitigate the negative consequences of taking casualties as death in battle was not seen a negative but as honorable achievement. Hezbollah culture of martyrdom also

²⁰⁸ Yezid Sayigh *Armed Struggle and the Search for State* 230

²⁰⁹ Eitan Azani *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 121

²¹⁰ Abed T. Kanaaneh *Understanding Hezbollah* (New York, Syracuse university press, 2021) 157-167

linked this the Shiite view of their imam Hussain martyrdom in the battle of Karbala. as both Hezbollah martyrs and Hussain's martyrdom was seen as sacrificing their lives in order to fight against injustice.

The main difference between Hezbollah and PFLP media use is that the latter focused on promoting Marxism and Palestinian culture. However, PFLP were unable to use other media mediums to spread their message, mostly relying on posters and their newspaper which in the end hampered their effort to spread their message to a wider audience as these mediums became less popular PFLP were unable to find a new replacement. Hezbollah in contrast used multiple mediums which ensured that Hezbollah's view was always available to the wider public. Additionally, Hezbollah use of propaganda had a wider strategic purpose such as prompting a culture of martyrdom in order to increase recruitment or shattering Israeli military image.

While PFLP mainly used Al-Haddaf as a mouthpiece for them they were unable to use propaganda strategically like Hezbollah. Another advantage for Hezbollah propaganda arm is that they were better able to adjust the content of their propaganda to better reflect what image Hezbollah wanted to reflect of itself as stated above Hezbollah during the 2000's wanted to be viewed as national liberation movement and their propaganda reflected this change. While PFLP after losing much of their revolutionary policy did not adjust their media to reflect that change. PFLP still used revolutionary rhetoric in their propaganda while the party's action did not reflect their propaganda which often led to contradictory behaviour from PFLP.

Another staple of Hezbollah propaganda is that it attempted to reach as wide an audience as possible both domestically and internationally therefore their propaganda included several different rhetoric to appeal to wide audience including nationalist, Islamist, and pan-Arabist elements. This aided Hezbollah in selling their image as national resistance to the Lebanese public and as a legitimate resistance against Israel to the Arab public and a Islamic resistance to the Muslim world. PFLP on the other hand always had the Palestinians as their main target audience therefore didn't significantly change their content in their media to suit a wider audience however this led to PFLP never being able to gain mass popularity inside the Palestinian national movement or abroad.

The last issue with PFLP's media was how they dedicated the space in Al Haddaf, much of their pages was filled with statements from higher up older members while younger members who did much of the fighting did not receive much attention which led to younger PFLP

members feeling neglected this problem became much more evident during the first intifada contributing significantly to rift between the old and the new guard of the PFLP. There is no evidence from Hezbollah suffering from this problem as many of their operations receive significant coverage from their affiliated media and their fallen comrades were significantly honored by their organization.

However, PFLP media was not ineffective as much of their works was important to Palestinian culture and national struggle this included books, poetry and art published by member of PFLP. Most important works was that produced by Ghassan Kanafani who became a Palestinian icon along with Leila Khaled who is also seen as a hero by many Palestinians. However, PFLP never fully capitalized on the popularity Kanafani and Khaled to increase their popularity within Palestinian national struggle.

6. Military organization and strategy

PFLP command follows a pyramid cell structure each cell contains a certain number of members, and each cell receives orders from a commanding cell this type of organization is ideal to avoid the entire organization getting compromised if one cell is captured, this type of structure also made it possible for them to operate in several countries as these cells could operate without a centralized command. additionally, each cluster makes up a league and each cluster of leagues makes up a region.²¹¹

To become a member of PFLP one must belong to the right social class which is either petit bourgeois or proletariat and be Palestinian or Arab. Potential member must be recommended by two other PFLP members. The potential member is evaluated before probably joining the PFLP, later during the training period which includes military and ideological education lasts between six months to a year. If the candidate makes it through this period, he will be yet again evaluated and be approved by higher ranking PFLP member. In theory PFLP member also must pay their party dues.

PFLP along with most Palestinian factions initially suffered from lack of experienced or trained fighter to mitigate this problem PFLP recruited officers from Jordan, Syria and Egypt who were sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, reportedly PFLP training was harsh several Palestinians who attended PFLP training camps dropped out due to these conditions.²¹² while

²¹¹ Cubert *PFLP's changing role in the Middle east* 117-118

²¹² Yezid Sayigh *Armed Struggle and the Search for State* 181

regular PFLP members received regular military training specialized training was reserved from members of external operations who training was catered prepare them for their mission.

Despite PFLP efforts to improve their cadre's combat effectiveness and discipline they still suffered from lack of discipline and poor combat performance, these issues hampered PFLP military campaign in Jordan and Lebanon and drew criticism from other Palestinian factions.²¹³ Disciplinary issues were not also only related to the cadres but also senior members of PFLP who vied for power and conducted operations without the knowledge or the blessing of the leadership these operations were often criminal in nature.²¹⁴ PFLP also suffered from members defecting from organization whenever PFLP took unpopular action such as demanding members pay their dues.²¹⁵

Hezbollah organize their military branch in a similar way to PFLP, following a cell structure however a major difference is that their cells enjoy a high level of autonomy, cell commanders were able to act as they see fit during battles. However strategic planning was central command role, and it was up to the cell commander to realize the goals set by central command. ²¹⁶

Hezbollah military branch is much bigger than PFLP therefore is organized differently, firstly, each Hezbollah fighter undergoes a military training, within the training period Hezbollah fighters can receive more specialized training such as anti-tank warfare and missile warfare.²¹⁷ After training Hezbollah fighter either become a full-time fighter or a part time fighter. The latter usually only occasionally fights when needed and is part of Hezbollah village defence, this force made up of local villagers who are tasked with defending their villages these units naturally exist inside villages which Hezbollah is the dominant political party. Regular Hezbollah fighters received better training than part time fighter.

PFLP initially supported conducting guerrilla warfare as a strategy to liberate Palestine as they similarly to Hezbollah that Israel military is far to strong, so guerrilla warfare is a necessity confront Israel. However, in 1981 they shifted this strategy in favour of more conventional military force armed with heavy weaponry this shift can be explained by that they were embroiled in the Lebanese civil war and needed standing armed forces to protect Palestinians in Lebanon and also to build credibility in the eyes of Palestinian by proving that

²¹³ Ibid 182

²¹⁴ Ibid 432

²¹⁵ Ibid 491

²¹⁶ Scott C. Farquhar *Back to Basics* 52-53

²¹⁷ Younes Saramifar *Living with the AK-47* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015) 107-110

they had a standing army to defend them from Israel and hostile Lebanese militia.²¹⁸

However, this shift proved to be a fatal flaw one year later when Israel invaded and with their superior army defeated the Palestinian forces. Hezbollah similarly shifted their strategy after the Israeli withdrawal in 2000's however rather than adopting a standing army strategy they chose a hybrid between guerrilla warfare and standing army doctrine.

Hezbollah army reformation proved to be more successful than PFLP when their new armed forces met the Israeli army in 2006. Furthermore, Hezbollah proved to be more successful in adapting a standing army tactics where valuable assets such as rocket, and missile launchers were well hidden ensuring that they weren't destroyed by IDF fighter jets. The part time fighters who had the task to defend their own villages had the advantage of knowing the terrain well and the standing army were much better trained than PFLP's even having a special force of their own. Advanced weapons including drones, anti-tank weapons, anti-ship missiles were also better utilized by Hezbollah these were used both defensive and in guerrilla style hit and run attacks by heavily trained soldiers. While PFLP when adopting this strategy failed to make the necessary adjustments that were needed in order to defend against the superior Israeli army. Unlike PFLP, Hezbollah fighters receive salaries so they can rely on their military service to support their families this meant that Hezbollah fighter dedicated more for the organization as they knew that their families were being taken care of.

7. Organization of PFLP and Hezbollah

PFLP's National Congress is the organizations governing body, members of the national congress are representatives from PFLP's sub groups. They are elected every four years, under the national congress is the central committee their members are a mix of elected member, paid employees and observers each elected member is also a part of the National congress and is elected by the national congress every four years to the central committee. The committee's tasks is to act on the behalf of the national congress when they are not in session, as well as vote on secretary general, deputy general secretary and the politburo members and to discuss and decide on politburo reports, central committee also have the power to suspend PFLP rules and declare a state of emergency. Politburo is the executive arm of the PFLP their role is to

²¹⁸ As'ad AbuKhalil Internal Contradictions in the PFLP: Decision Making and Policy Orientation. *the middle east journal* Vol. 41; Iss. 3 1987

implement the national congress and the central committee's policy. PFLP is further organized under districts and regional levels their organizational level mirrors the higher level, the smallest PFLP group is a cell with three to ten members with its own secretary general and deputy secretary general cell also have the duty to guide circles which composes PFLP inductees, each neighborhood or workplace have a number of cell which then makes up a league and each district have multiple leagues, Leagues also have leagues congress which elect representatives to the district congress.²¹⁹

Hezbollah's highest authority is the Shura council (Majlis al Qarar) composed by 7 high ranking Hezbollah members including the General secretary and the deputy general secretary. Shura council members task is to debate and to agree on courses of action. Additionally these members are responsible for each of Hezbollah five major branches. The Jihad council which oversees Hezbollah military activities, The Judicial council for rulings on religious law, Executives council composed of regional Hezbollah leaders and is tasked with defining Hezbollah actions and foreign policy, the political council is tasked with organizing Hezbollah political party in the Lebanese political system and analysing the political climate in Lebanon to recommend a course of action to Shura Council. Lastly is the Parliamentary works commission who organize and coordinate the Hezbollah members of Parliament.

Members of the shura council are elected by the General convention composed by some 250 high ranking Hezbollah members, The General convention meets every three years to elect new members of Shura Council. Members of this convention also have the privilege of holding debate and discussion on party related issues, most rank and file Hezbollah members abide by a strict code that places importance on discipline and the importance of following orders.²²⁰

The PFLP's system is more democratic than Hezbollah's, the voting right given to all cadres means that's every member of PFLP have a voice in the decision-making process and the ability to choose a leader, but this however came with some limitations the list of candidates for the central committee must be approved by the National congress and further debate on an issue once a decision has been reached is prohibited. Yet this is much more democratic than the Hezbollah system, for a member to have any kind of role in Hezbollah decision making process a member must earn that right by serving the party loyally and for a long period of time, younger, or junior members have no say in how Hezbollah run its business. Hezbollah

²¹⁹ Cubert PFLP's the pflp's changing role in the middle east 119-120

²²⁰ Joseph Daher *Hezbollah 94-97*

oligarchic system ensures absolute loyalty from its members and an emphasis on following orders while the older more experienced members have right to discuss and vote on major issues.

Hezbollah has been relatively free from defections or internal conflict unlike PFLP who suffered from splits and from internal divisions between older and younger cadres, PFLP centralized democracy was supposed to prevent such issues from taking place, but again the leadership grew more distanced from their younger members, a number of factors contributed to this divide, firstly PFLP leadership not taking a hard line on Israeli Palestinian negotiation during the first intifada, secondly the leadership of PFLP became increasingly corrupt, thirdly PFLP old guard were reluctant to share power with the younger OPT members of PFLP, Their own news media rarely reported on the PFLP member inside the OPT instead focused on the old guard dedicating much of their news on them instead of the OPT members.

Hezbollah on the other hand has shown that they are better able to maintain their organizations cohesion even after changing and abandoning an important part of their ideology despite Tufayli leaving the party no significant defection or strife occurred. Although it might seem that Hezbollah strict party discipline might have helped Hezbollah avoiding these problems by banning debate among its rank and file and imposing strict rules to abide by orders dissent would not be spread in Hezbollah. But a more probable reason is that they avoided these problems due to Hezbollah continuing its hard-liner against Israel and the west while at the same time softening their image to the Lebanese public reinventing the party as a resistance movement. Furthermore, Hezbollah did not abandon the Islamic character of the party instead adopted a less radical form of Islamism where Islam was still important part of the party but not one that demanded the establishment of an Islamic state.

Another problem facing PFLP centralized democratic system was that for cadres it was difficult to vote out cell leaders who lost their support within their cells as voting out cell leaders was sometimes seen as mutiny. Another consequence was regional leaders often had their own supporter base within the cells they represent, these middle level leaders used this position to challenge the upper leaderships authority threatening the organization cohesion by sowing discontent.²²¹

The centralized democratic system of PFLP also invited another problem mainly factionalism within the organization as all members had voting rights some popular local leaders could

²²¹ Yezid Sayigh *Armed Struggle and the Search for State* 232

build up base of supporters to challenge the leader's position and dictate the organizations course of action and threaten to defect if leader did not meet the demand of the popular leader. So, the general secretary had to be aware of rising personalities within the organization that could challenge his position or defect taking with him many members. This situation occurred when Hadad defected from PFLP after refusing to stop the plane hijacking.²²² Hezbollah only have small number of members with voting rights or power within the organization, therefore members gathering a big following is less likely additionally evident by Tufaily's defection where only himself was kicked out of the party with no major defection from Hezbollah.

The biggest contradiction between Hezbollah and PFLP is that former have clear distinction between their military wing and other wings. Unlike PFLP who is essentially is an militarized political party, PFLP reasoning for not having separate parts is to avoid polarization between armed and political part. Every member is expected to fight as well as participate in politics however, with Hezbollah this polarization did not occur additionally, PFLP method of organization hampered their military effort as political issues and theory took away much of the organization time and efforts that could be used on developing military skills. Much of PFLP meeting were centered around discussing political issues rather than developing military strategy or other military matters, this resulted in little direct action against Israel which disappointed their members in the OPT and PFLP leadership not being able to build a better functioning military apparatus.²²³

Leaders of Hezbollah military wing on the other hand only had to concern themselves with military matter this allowed them to focus on building complex strategies and develop better military tactics and more importantly greater autonomy on how to build up their armed forces. This ensured that only those with necessary military knowledge had say in military affairs. Furthermore, Hezbollah fighters enjoyed greater levels of autonomy than PFLP members as their military wing did not require prior political approval to conduct an operation only approval from the secretary general. And if the upper leadership wanted to conduct a military operation the local commanders enjoyed great autonomy on how to plan and conduct the operation.

Funding is also major factor in Hezbollah and PFLP's organization. PFLP's funding comes from donation from PFLP money collection drives, various countries and internal party fees paid by their own members. PFLP initially was very open on what it used the fund for

²²² As'ad Abukahlil Internal Contradictions in the PFLP

²²³ Ibid 473

however this changed when they started to receive fundings from other countries and wealthy individuals while the funding from countries including Libya, Iraq and Syria was less reliable than Hezbollah Iran support. It was enough to change PFLP from a revolutionary organization to a more bureaucratic. PFLP started to focus more on investing this money in businesses and much of the newfound wealth came in the pockets of elites. Ordinary members also started to receive salaries however this was in complete contradiction to the party ideology and structure as PFLP was supposed to made up of members that would scarifies everything for the cause and not fight for a salary this resulted in further contradictory behaviour of PFLP leadership that would later shatter their revolutionary image. Hezbollah finances are close secret however it is safe to assume that much of it comes from Iran and is much more substantial than PFLP's resulting in them being able to run a bigger organization. Iranian support however comes at a cost Hezbollah is much too dependent on Iran which results in Hezbollah having to align itself more with Iranian foreign policy, this in turn hampered Hezbollah self-created image of Lebanese Islamic resistance as many saw Hezbollah as an Iranian proxy despite all of the shortcoming of PFLP they never had to defend themselves from being accused of acting as a proxy for a foreign nation.

8 Hezbollah and PFLP Ideological differences

Both groups have very distinct ideologies. Still, in practice they often take action that contradict the ideology they follow this is due to real world circumstances that is outside both groups control and therefore in order to understand their view and how these two groups see their ideal world one must discount the compromises both had to make in order to not become completely marginalized. Therefore, in the case of PFLP we will examine their ideology through their revolutionary Marxist principles and Hezbollah we will examine primarily through their early radical ideology as both groups have changed outwardly to accommodate the Lebanese Political climate they are still inwardly an Islamist group who still follow wiliat al Faqih.

PFLP principally believes that there is a war between the west and the Arab world, the west wants to exploit the Arabs rich resources. Israel is an extension of the western world like a western outpost, Palestinians and Arabs cannot defeat this threat without a clear Ideology and an organization to guide the Arabs and Palestinian to victory. Marxist Leninism became later a much more important part of the Ideology of PFLP. Owing to their ideology PFLP wished to see a world free of class distinction and in order to achieve this they needed to employ class struggle where the proletariat led by a party seized power and controlled the means of production. The world was locked in a constant struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed, the industrialized countries looting the underdeveloped countries. PFLP and the Palestinian belonged to the latter category. PFLP also is inspired by Maoism in the importance of identifying the true enemies in PFLP's view they have four, the west mainly the post-colonial countries and USA, Israel, world Zionism movement. The Arab reaction which are capitalist pro-western states in their view these states are dependent on western protection. While pro-western countries are undoubtedly the enemy Arab revolutionary regimes along with socialist countries are the allies. PFLP also divides Palestinian into three distinct classes first Proletariat and worker class who will be the pillars of their revolution along with the petit bourgeois. However, support of the latter must be treated with caution as they could take over the revolution to benefit their own class therefore, they must be regularly replaced with the Proletariat. The last ones Hauge bourgeois should not be recruited into the revolution as they only work to serve their own capitalist interests and exception is made for members of this class who live abroad since they might support the revolution out of sense of guilt.²²⁴

PFLP's ideology is quite clear while Hezbollah ideology is completely different matter the open letter released in both 1985 and 2009 is supposed to outline what ideological doctrine Hezbollah follows. Still, as their 1985 open letter states Lebanon will become an Islamic republic following sharia laws the issue is that how Islamic laws is interpreted varies depending on the scholar or the various Islamic school's interpretation of Islamic scripture, therefore to understand what Hezbollah's ideology one should explore what Islamic scholars close to Hezbollah (Ragheb Har, Hassan Fadlalah, Ayatollah Khomeini etc) have interpreted Islamic scriptures in order to fully understand Hezbollah ideology.

Another issue dealing with Hezbollah's ideology is that after the 90's Hezbollah started to moderate their worldview to fit into Lebanese political environment. The overly religious

²²⁴ Cubert PFLP's the pflp's changing role in the middle east 96-102

goals in their ideology were removed such as establishing an Islamic state and following wilayat al faqih inside Hezbollah organization their members are still devout Muslims who follow the Islamic rules as it's an important rule for a member to join Hezbollah furthermore the party has strong ties to Iranian government and still follows the Ayatollah orders, therefore we will focus more on their 1985 open letter and their original worldview as this gives better understanding of Hezbollah.

In their 1985 open letter they introduce themselves as “sons of Hezbollah’s umma” as in they are a part of wider Islamic world and their enemies who are the oppressors these enemies are the USA who they refer to as the “great Satan” and Israel who are “little Satan” and their internal enemies are phalangist who they see as collaborators with Israel. Additionally, they also address the Lebanese government who also is an oppressor against Muslims and reactionary Arab regimes which are the countries that pro-west and collaborates with Israel. Hezbollah opens an invitation to all the oppressed regardless of sect or religion to fight these oppressors. Hezbollah in their open letter make no attempts to hide their intentions to implement an Islamic system in Lebanon however, they explain that this will implement an Islamic system by force, and everyone will be able to choose their religion according to them most would choose this system as it was most just according to them.²²⁵

Taqyyah is a doctrine that is exclusive to Shiism. This means to hide one's faith in order to preserve the life as Shiites under Sunni dominated government had to hide their faith in order to avoid persecution in relation to Hezbollah ideology they exercise political taqyyah in order to avoid fitnah which means strife. This means that Hezbollah it is important to maintain unity and avoid discontent.²²⁶

Tabia is the opposite of Taqyyah this means mass mobilization of Muslims in order to bring political change by revolting and bringing in a true Islamic government. Hezbollah attempted this prior to 92' however as they realized that this would be unachievable taqyyah doctrine has become their main doctrine.²²⁷

Hezbollah method to fight the oppressed is through defensive smaller Jihad, this means that Muslims fighting a defensive war to protect themselves, their faith and property. In order to achieve victory in smaller jihad one must first be victorious in greater jihad, this means that a

²²⁵ Joseph Alagha *Hizbullah's Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto* (Leiden: Pallas Publications, 2011) 40-50

²²⁶ Joseph Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology* 96

²²⁷ Ibid 97

mujahid must first rid himself of all sin and dedicate himself to faith only then will he be able to undertake a smaller jihad.²²⁸ Furthermore, a fighter that engages in Jihad and falls becomes a martyr, there are also four different levels of martyrdom, the highest is one that dies in a martyrdom operation, second is the one that falls in a military engagement third are ordinary civilian who dies due to the war and fourth non-Muslim combatants who dies fighting against the oppressor.²²⁹

Their 2009 manifesto is similar to their '85 manifesto with the enemies being the USA and Israel are still a danger and the enemies warning Lebanon against their plots. One major difference is that they toned down Islamic references in particular the ones related to wilayat al faqih and Islamic government. Attack against falangist is replaced with criticism of Lebanon sectarian political system.²³⁰

Both Hezbollah and PFLP have many similarities between each other mainly Anti Imperialism and anti-Zionism. The difference here is how both ideologies confronts imperialism. PFLP which view imperialism through the lenses of capitalism therefore the only way to fight back is through a socialist revolution, complete overthrow of the capitalist system would halt imperialism since it's a product of capitalism. It also means that most capitalist Arabic nation are enemies in the eyes of PFLP since they follow a system that facilitates imperialism while Hezbollah only chastise Arabic countries that collaborates with western countries. Hezbollah an Islamic revolution is the only way to completely halt imperialism, they also take it further by adding that western imperialism also includes ideas, ideologies and cultures that are western and thus these are westerners' way of replacing Muslim indigenous culture. PFLP does not address these issues specially since their own ideology is western. Furthermore, Hezbollah while calling for all oppressed to rise are still mainly concerned with confronting imperialism within Lebanon, therefore little of their anti-imperialism rhetoric is directed against Arabic countries that collaborate with western imperialist countries, while focusing much of their rhetoric against Maronites parties who are western oriented. While PFLP view most Arabs countries as enemy and western puppet in scene PFLP anti-imperialism is much more international oriented than Hezbollah's.

Another major similarity is Anti-Zionism. Both groups view on Israel is the same with one minor difference Hezbollah view the struggle against Zionism as a religious duty while PFLP

²²⁸ Ibid 103-104

²²⁹ Ibid 108-109

²³⁰ Joseph Alagha *Hiszbollah's Documents* 118-130

views it as a national liberation struggle. Hezbollah views the Zionism as a movement that displaces and kill their Muslim brothers and occupies Muslim land including Dom of the rock one of the holiest sites in Islam therefore it their religious duty to practice smaller jihad against Israel. PFLP on the other hand is mainly concerned with the displacement of the Palestinian from what they see as their land, PFLP because of the irreligiousness of their ideology there is no mention of the religious aspect of the conflict. Despite Hezbollah focus on the religious aspects this does not necessarily mean that they purely dismiss the non-Muslim Palestinians since in their open letter they invite all oppressed to stand up and fight with them despite any religious differences.

Their views also differs when it comes to how to fight against Zionism, PFLP view of right way to confront Israel is more nuanced than Hezbollah's, just like their view on Anti-Imperialism struggle but within Palestinian context their view is that which class leads the fight is important to prevail here it's clear that the classes that have the least thus are least corrupted by materialism the one that are most suited to lead the struggle. Hezbollah on the other hand does not distinguish between social classes, religiousness of the fighters is the most important factor to successfully confront Israel, the heavy emphasis on faith is because Hezbollah view it as a smaller defensive jihad and to be able to wage smaller jihad the fighters must first successfully complete the greater jihad.

Martyrdom aspect is also different within these two ideologies PFLP views martyrdom simply as fighter who has fallen fighting against Israel. Hezbollah view it as a sacrifice made by their fighter in the name of God and the country with the reward for the martyr being awarded the highest place in paradise. The highest form being suicide attack against the enemy these suicide attacks must also be sanctioned by religious scholar to be accepted. These factors giving martyrdom in Hezbollah view a heavy religious aspect and deprioritizing the nationalistic aspect of martyrdom. The heavy emphasis on the religious aspect of martyrdom can be explained that suicide is one of the biggest sin in Islam therefore having a religious justification is important to motivate Muslim men to undertake such operations while the PFLP being an irreligious organization did not need a religious justification therefore the nationalist aspect of self-sacrifice for the nation is sufficient.

Both ideologies hold a world view that the world is divided between the oppressor and the oppressed, where in order to achieve equality the oppressed must rise and overthrow the old system and take power by violent revolution. The Oppressor being the western imperialism and Zionism in the case of both ideologies. But their view on who the oppressed are differs,

PFLP views most Arabs and third world countries as the oppressed, but they emphasize that the working class are subjected to oppression by imperialism and Arab capitalist states which rely on protection from western imperialist nations, all these nations need to be overthrown and replaced with workers led socialist states.

Hezbollah while referring to most third world countries as oppressed, they place special emphasis on Muslim are specially targeted by western nations, unlike the PFLP the Arab identity of the oppressed Arabs are replaced in favour of the Muslim identity, the secular governments in the Muslim world are also to a certain extent guilty in the oppression of the Muslim since they don't follow Islamic system, Hezbollah view on non-Islamic system is that they are flawed and will never be able to fully address the issues faced by the oppressed, in the case of PFLP Marxist Leninism Hezbollah view the ideology is also flawed since it would only address issues faced by capitalism and do not adequately address other issues that Islam also addresses.

The concept of taqiya has no equivalence in PFLP's ideology however the Tabia is similar to PFLP view that the proletariat and petit bourgeois must mobilize to seize power in order to bring a just government and end their oppression from the upper class both view that in order to create a just world the oppressed must seize power with obvious difference that Hezbollah mobilization is the faithful Muslim and the just state is the one that follows the rules of Islam this brings us to another major difference between PFLP and Hezbollah. The latter have esoteric and spiritual worldview while PFLP hold a materialistic view. Hezbollah view that the ideal leader is one who holds the greatest knowledge of Islam and has the strongest faith, which is the faqih, his followers must also have a high level of faith in order to become true soldiers one must also have a strong faith in Islam and follow the rules of Islam strongly only then would they achieve victory as they believe that the party of Allah shall be victorious. PFLP on the other hand because of their Marxist ideology have a historical and dialectical materialist view. In contrast with Hezbollah idealism where spiritualism or faith is the factors that determines who will be victorious PFLP ideology have no space for spiritual or religious factors, the oppression that Palestinians and the rest of the Arab world faces from the west is purely for materialistic gains and the only ones who can confront this threat are working class people who have the least, a just system of government is where workers seize the means of production and redistribute the wealth.

9. Conclusion

We have now compared PFLP and Hezbollah and explored what are the main differences and similarities between them. The main similarities are that both grew out of states where government control was weak and as a result violent non state actor were able to gather strength without much interference from the state. Both Hezbollah and PFLP rose out of a need to confront what they saw as the continuation of imperialism in their countries, Israel's establishment and the subsequent displacement of Palestinians and the Muslims radicalized many Palestinians and Muslims this combined with the failure of Arab states to confront west, and Israel gave way to radical groups Hezbollah and PFLP who believed that they needed to take matters in their own hands to confront the West and Israel. This view is also reflected in both Hezbollah's Islamist and PFLP's ideology where anti westernism and anti-Israel sentiment is important.

When both organizations were established, they started out as radical and dogmatic groups and later both replaced the radicalism and dogmatism in favor of pragmatism, after losing their revolutionary character their ideology became less of factor in the decision making processes inevitably making them less reliant on violence as means to achieve their goal.

The main differences between Hezbollah and PFLP is that while both enjoyed support from foreign countries. Hezbollah's alliance with Iran was much more substantial than PFLP's alliance with other countries. Iran Hezbollah relationship included financial, military and technical assistance furthermore, both followed the same ideology which further cemented their strong relationship. PFLP's ideological backer the USSR was rather uninterested in supporting PFLP. However, when PFLP received funds from other countries it only resulted in the party becoming more bureaucratized and corrupted, Hezbollah on the other hand invested heavily in military, social service, and political institutions which in turn made them more popular and stronger than PFLP.

Hezbollah also was more invested in having an effective military, this resulted in them having a more effective military than PFLP, the military of Hezbollah thanks to their efficacy were able to hold their own against Israel. PFLP had overall an ineffective army neither were they able to effectively confront Israel or Jordan, Furthermore PFLP made no distinction between their political and military organ this proved to be a mistake as the politics took precedence over their military.

How two organized is also different, PFLP preferred central democracy while Hezbollah favored hierarchical system. Although PFLP's central democracy later proved to be flawed as the organization was plagued by factionalism, discontent and fractionalization Hezbollah was relatively free from these issues as strict party discipline was the rule and strictly implemented. Another advantage that that Hezbollah has that it is was geographically closer to its supporter base and in turn had better contact with their supporters while PFLP who had bases in several different countries were unable to effectively maintain contact with their supporters inside OPT.

Hezbollah in comparison with PFLP is much more popular and recognized. This fact is owed to their effective military and their actions during the wars with Israel and in Syria. However, effective use of media also played an important part in building up Hezbollah popularity. PFLP on the other hand used media to pollster Palestinian culture but also as a propaganda tool however unlike Hezbollah PFLP stuck to few medium while Hezbollah branched out the media operation. Furthermore, Hezbollah used propaganda to construct a certain image of themselves to sell to the public while PFLP only used this tool to spread their own message to the masses.

The popularity of non-state actors in the middle east were the results of states that lacked the means to control radical movements inside their own borders but also decades of Western imperialism and Israel's establishment on what they saw as their rightful land, the subsequent failure of Arab nation to meet this threat resulted in radical movements seeing it "fit to take matter into their own hand" at their early period these radical movement are at their most radical and later moderate their stances to become more pragmatic and less extremist. This pattern repeats itself for both the Islamist Hezbollah and the Marxist-Leninist PFLP however the latter faced a decline in popularity and political relevance while Hezbollah faced the opposite, as explained above this is because of the factors in which PFLP failed such as in (poor military performance, poor organization cohesion etc.) and Hezbollah succeeded in. Another important factor is that Hezbollah was able to successfully confront Israel thus successfully "taking matters in their own hands" against the enemy that the Arab nation couldn't. This leaves the question, If PFLP were able to be as effective as Hezbollah would be able to see a strong Marxist movement in the Middle east?

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