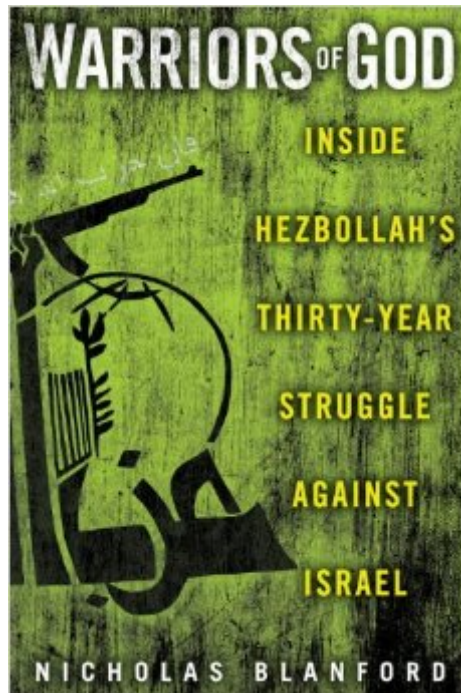


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Warriors Of God: Inside Hezbollah's Thirty-Year Struggle Against Israel



Synopsis

Hezbollah is the most powerful Islamist group operating in the Middle East today, and no other Western journalist has penetrated as deeply inside this secretive organization as Nicholas Blanford. Now Blanford has written the first comprehensive inside account of Hezbollah and its enduring struggle against Israel. Based on more than a decade and a half of reporting in Lebanon and conversations with Hezbollah's determined fighters, Blanford reveals their ideology, motivations, and training, as well as new information on military tactics, weapons, and sophisticated electronic warfare and communications systems. Using exclusive sources and his own dogged investigative skills, Blanford traces Hezbollah's extraordinary evolution "from a zealous group of raw fighters motivated by Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution into the most formidable non-state military organization in the world, whose charismatic leader vows to hasten Israel's destruction. With dramatic eyewitness accounts, including Blanford's own experiences of the battles, massacres, triumphs, and tragedies that have marked the conflict, the story follows the increasingly successful campaign of resistance that led to Israel's historic withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000. *Warriors of God* shows how Hezbollah won hearts and minds with exhaustive social welfare programs and sophisticated propaganda skills. Blanford traces the group's secret military build-up since 2000 and reveals the stunning scope of its underground network of tunnels and bunkers, becoming the only journalist to independently discover and explore them. With the Middle East fearful of another, even more destructive war between Lebanon and Israel, Blanford tenaciously pursues Hezbollah's post-2006 battle plans in the Lebanese mountains, earning him newspaper scoops as well as a terrifying interrogation and a night in jail. Featuring sixteen years of probing interviews with Hezbollah's leaders and fighters, *Warriors of God* is essential to understanding a key player in a region rocked by change and uncertainty.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was surprised at how good this book is. Despite its significant military and political power, and well-deserved status as "the most powerful non-state military force in the world," Hezbollah remains by its own necessity and design a "shadowy" organization, and thus a challenging object for anyone wishing to research its history, structure, operational record, and military capabilities. In "Warriors of God," Nicholas Blanford, since 1994 the Beirut correspondent for "The Times" and several other newspapers and magazines, has succeeded rather brilliantly in offering as thorough a portrait of Hezbollah as we are likely to have for many years hence. South Lebanon, while ethnically diverse and topographically rugged, is not a big place, and in his seventeen years of reporting prior to "Warriors of God"'s 2011 publication, Blanford has ranged all over its varied landscape, usually while covering the Israel-Hezbollah conflict. He has also gained access to a diverse body of Hezbollah members, from part-time militiamen and full-time fighters, to an interview with the head of Hezbollah himself, Hassan Nasrallah, and various other officials. Blanford follows the arc of Shiite history in the Jabal Amil region (roughly today's South Lebanon) from the Middle Ages to Lebanon's independence in the mid-1940s, and into the 1970s-'80s when the marginalized Lebanese Shiites sought more effective representation in Lebanon's confessional political system. Hezbollah emerged in this latter period as a Shiite militia in the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) more closely aligned with Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini than the mainstream Shiite militia, Amal. But Hezbollah found its real purpose with Israel's 1982 invasion of southern Lebanon.

Initial thoughts before a summary of the book: *The writing, as one reviewer noted, is a competency. In many places it reads like a novel. The author's 1st-person narrative adds flavor. *It is slanted towards Hezbollah, though not uncritically. Key argument: Syria is the vital geo-strategic lynchpin connecting Iran to Hezbollah. It grants Hezbollah strategic depth and political backing, and serves as a conduit for the transfer of heavy weapons across the rugged border with Lebanon. (Blanford xvi). Unlike other paramilitary/terrorist groups, or at least how they are perceived, Hezbollah provided for the people's welfare. If the Israelis bulldozed your home, they would build you a new one. If your husband was killed, Hezbollah would see you are taken care of. Hezbollah's Evolution The Taif Agreement: coming at the tail end of the Lebanese civil war. In some ways it redefine how

Hezbollah would operate (93ff)(1) It established Syria as the dominant Arab power(2) There was new leadership in Iran. Hezbollah now had to accommodate itself to more moderate allies. One of the things that makes Hezbollah so dangerous is it routinely adapted its strategies over 20 years against a superior force. As a result IDF knew it faced a full-fledged insurgency by an enemy trained and armed by Iran, politically protected by Syria, and implementing ever more effective and deadly tactics (146). Israel's problem: its initial purpose in occupying Lebanon was to protect its northern border. Hezbollah quickly negated that. If provoked, Hezbollah could rain Katyusha rockets on Israel. Therefore, Israel had to find a way to strike and neutralize Hezbollah without Lebanese casualties.

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