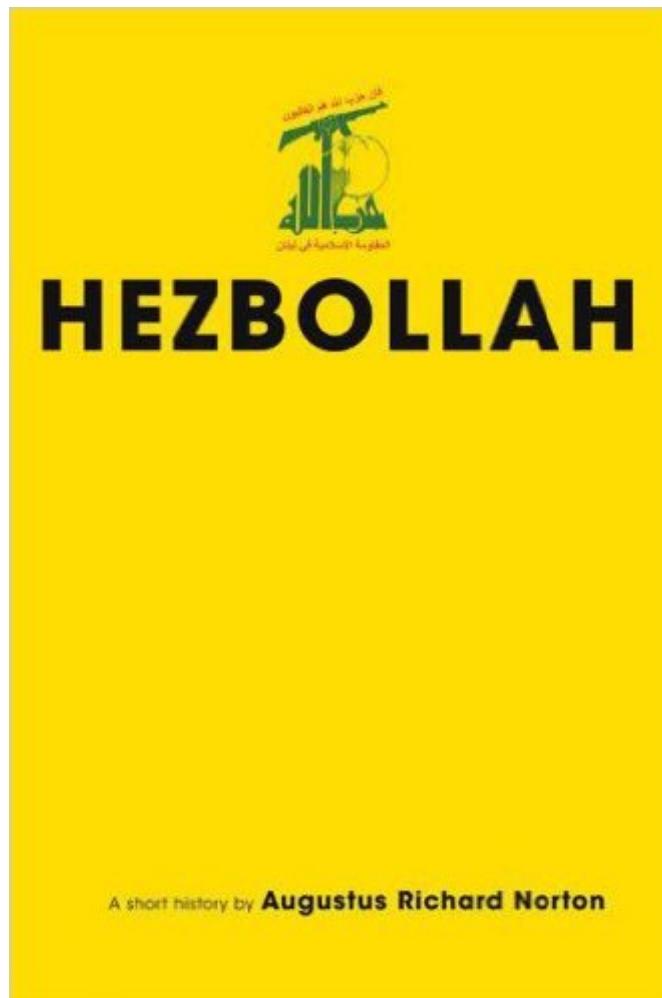


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Hezbollah: A Short History (Princeton Studies In Muslim Politics)



Synopsis

Most policymakers in the United States and Israel have it wrong. Hezbollah isn't a simple terrorist organization--nor is it likely to disappear soon. Following Israel's war against Hezbollah in the summer of 2006, the Shi'i group--which combines the functions of a militia, a social service and public works provider, and a political party--is more popular than ever in the Middle East while retaining its strong base of support in Lebanon. And Hezbollah didn't merely confront Israel and withstand its military onslaught. Hezbollah's postwar reconstruction efforts were judged better than the U.S. government's response to Hurricane Katrina--not by al-Jazeera, but by an American TV journalist. In Hezbollah, one of the world's leading experts on Hezbollah has written the essential guide to understanding the complexities and paradoxes of a group that remains entrenched at the heart of Middle East politics. With unmatched clarity and authority, Augustus Richard Norton tells how Hezbollah developed, how it has evolved, and what direction it might take in the future. Far from being a one-dimensional terrorist group, Norton explains, Hezbollah is a "janus-faced" organization in the middle of an incomplete metamorphosis from extremism to mundane politics, an evolution whose outcome is far from certain. Beginning as a terrorist cat's-paw of Iran, Hezbollah has since transformed itself into an impressive political party with an admiring Lebanese constituency, but it has also insisted on maintaining the potent militia that forced Israel to withdraw from Lebanon in 2000 after almost two decades of occupation. The most accessible, informed, and balanced analysis of the group yet written, Hezbollah is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the Middle East.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Dr. Norton's short history of Hezbollah provides a nice introduction to the birth, development, and evolution of this complex organization for American (and other English speaking) readers. The US media almost always portrays Hezbollah as an anti-Semitic, Islamofascist, terrorist organization that is opposed to Israel, America, and freedom because they are 'evil'. The reality is, of course, much more complex. If you are tired of reading the US media's propaganda about Hezbollah and want to learn a bit more about reality, this is a good place to start. There are several strengths to this book, and in particular, there are several key points that Norton addresses that I feel are especially significant. First, I think that the reader who is relatively new to Hezbollah and/or Lebanese history and politics in general will better understand the complexities and non-linearities amongst the various confessional groups. The relationships, both internal and external, between the various actors in Lebanon CANNOT be simply understood in terms of the Arab/Israeli, Shi'ite/Sunni, Muslim/Christian, and pro/anti Syrian forces. The alliances among all the major players inside Lebanon (e.g. Hezbollah, AMAL, the various Maronite and Orthodox groups, etc.) as well as with the outside players (primarily Syria, the US, France, and Israel) are constantly changing. Second, I think that the centrality of the Palestinian issue will become clearer to most readers. There are hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees living as non-citizens in Lebanon, and this was the most important (but certainly not only) cause of the disintegration of the Lebanese govt in the mid-70s. This problem still hangs over everything else in Lebanon.

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