

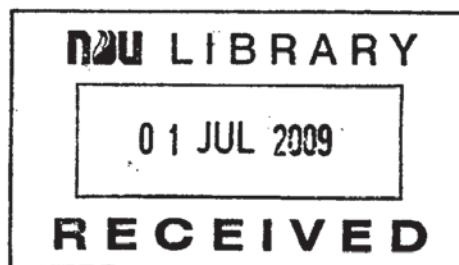
Notre Dame University
Faculty of Political Science,
Public Administration & Diplomacy

**Political Adaptation of Hezbollah to the Lebanese
Political System**

M. A. Thesis

by

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**Political Adaptation of Hezbollah to the Lebanese Political
System**
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Submitted to the Faculty of Political Science, Public
Administration, and Diplomacy

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Public Administration

Notre Dame University-Lebanon
2008

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is composed of eight chapters. Chapter one is the introduction. Chapter two is an overview of the historical background of Hezbollah. The chapter is divided into four parts: first, the creation of Hezbollah; second, the Iranian and Syrian factor; third, the party's ideology and structure; and fourth, the party's resistance, hostage taking, and suicide bombings. Chapter three concentrates on the religious ideology and strategy of Hezbollah, with an overview of the Shiites' beliefs.

The following three chapters, four, five, and six, analyze the efforts Hezbollah put into its political transformation. For that purpose, three points are in focus: the party's participation in elections, its active social engagement in its Shiite community, and its diminished military action, until July 2006. Chapter four observes Hezbollah's political behavior and tactics in the parliamentary elections of 1992, 1996, and 2000. Chapter five covers the party's social welfare system. The activities and achievements of some of its prominent social organs such as Jihad al-Bina', the Islamic Health Committee, and the Martyr's Foundation are outlined. Chapter six examines the behavior of Hezbollah after the tragic events of September 11 and the Western view of Hezbollah, and vice versa. Chapter seven explores the 2006 July War, and in that chapter the different actions and reactions of the two

parties involved in the war is mentioned. Moreover, in chapter seven, the causes of the war and its effects on Lebanon are also analyzed. Chapter eight is the conclusion.

The Lebanese political party Hezbollah was established in 1982 by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as part of the Iranian Leader Ayatollah Khomeini's effort to export the Islamic Revolution to the region. Providing the party with substantial military and financial backing, Iran no doubt played the decisive role in the creation of Hezbollah. Moreover, the political mobilization of the Lebanese Shiite community contributed significantly to the emergence of the party.⁹ As a matter of fact, the phenomenon of the abrupt mobilization of the Shiites was attributed to the radical socio-economic and political changes that were beginning to take place as early as the 1960s. The outbreak of the Lebanese war in 1975, the disappearance of Imam Musa al-Sadr in 1978, the Khomeini Iranian Revolution in 1979, as well as a succession of Israeli military campaigns against Lebanon leading to the Israeli invasion of the country in 1982, all provided the volatile socio-political environment that nurtured a hotbed of radical ideology and therefore favored the rise of a radical ideological political party like Hezbollah.

Sometime after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Hezbollah rose to prominence by committing itself to an armed resistance against Israel and by engaging in social activism in the Shiite community. These achievements won the party mass support and a powerful bargaining position in domestic politics. The fact that Hezbollah had stayed away from sectarian conflicts during the war had increased the party's popularity. Directly after the Lebanese war, Hezbollah has been

seeking “Lebanization” for several reasons. To start with, the party fears losing the political power and the popularity with the masses it has acquired in the past years. Also, Hezbollah sought “Lebanization” to consolidate and fortify its power base vis-à-vis the other sects in Lebanon and the region which fall in accordance with Iranian wishes and strategy.

Since 1992, the year when Hezbollah first manifested its serious intentions to enter mainstream Lebanese politics by participating in parliamentary elections, and until our present day, the party has been claiming that transformation from a radical military party to a Lebanese political player has become its principle objective. The thesis explores that claim and will attempt to disclose whether Hezbollah has really shifted from an armed, ideological, and radical party to a Lebanese political party engaged in the Lebanese political system.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. Methodology

1. Research questions

Several questions shall be answered to comprehend the political transformation of Hezbollah and if this transformation from a radical military party to a Lebanese political party can be achieved.

First, has the transformation of Hezbollah from a radical military party into a political party been successful? Second, what are the distinctive traits of that transformation? Third, how does the transformation process of the party and the efforts that Hezbollah has put into transformation determine the future of the party? Did the transformation take place? Could it ever take place?

2. Clarification of concepts

a. Sectarian / Sectarianism

Sectarianism is not synonymous with religiosity. According to Sami Ofelsh, there are three significant differences between the two. First, “*while*

sectarianism may imply some intolerance of sectarian 'others' and encourage feelings of competition with them, religiosity does not necessarily imply intolerance."¹ As a matter of fact, religiosity may be personal, dormant, and passive in many instances. Another difference is that *"a sectarian person is not necessarily a religiously practicing person in behavior, and attitudes."*² Third, most of the religious conflicts that have taken place throughout history have exhibited attempts to convert the "others," subdue them on a religious basis, or even try to isolate them. Oflesh defines sectarianism as follows:

*Sectarianism could be initially identified as an elite-promoted mode of differentiation among religiously affiliated members of the society in terms of access to power and control over resources. Although this differentiation is primarily a perceived one on the popular level, it may materialize in association with the competing elite interests in building a solid constituency among their co-religionists. The main goals in sectarianism are diffusing the popular classes' demands for reforms aimed at alleviating their deteriorating conditions and redirecting their activism into intra-class competition that weakens their abilities for change and advances elite control over them.*³

b. Lebanese political system

The Lebanese political system has been adapted to fit the particular religio-political structure of the country and the Lebanese constitution. This system is specifically based on confessionalism, a political formula that allocates political powers in accordance to a certain sectarian ratio divided between Christians and

¹ Ofelsh, Sami A. "Lebanon's Second Republic: Secular Talk, Sectarian Application." *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 21, i1, Winter 1999, p 97.

² Ibid, p 97.

³ Ibid, p 97.

Muslims. confessionalism was a result of the National Pact in 1943. The seats in the Lebanese Parliament have been divided according to a 50-50 sectarian quota between Christians and Muslims. The President has to be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of Parliament a Shiite Muslim. Such confessional system was designed to promote coexistence and ensure balance of power among the numerous different religious communities in the country. Michael Hudson summarizes well the relationship between the political stability of Lebanon and the institutionalization of proportional representation:

Lebanon's fragmented body politics --- its traditional pluralism --- has necessitated a political system based upon the balance of power, in the absence of positive legitimacy for the institutions of the state. In turn, the balance of power has required institutions that promote democratic values. Without the democratic institutions the balance of power would cease to be stable and without stability the state would cease to exist. Lebanon's representative institutions are an essential condition of its stability, not a luck byproduct.⁴

c. Lebanese political parties

Lebanese political parties are hard to define. They operate in the confessional system, "a type of democratic system which is not familiar in the democratic West", and that confessional system distinguishes them from other modern political parties.⁵ As a matter of fact, Lebanese parties cannot really compete for power as in the Western world, the real center of power in Lebanon lies in the

⁴Hudson, Michael C. "Democracy and Social Mobilization in Lebanese Politics." Comparative Politics, Vol. 1, No. 2, January 1969, p 245.

⁵Suleiman, Michael W. "The Role of Political Parties in a Confessional Democracy: The Lebanese Case." The Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 20, No. 3, September 1967, p 682.

hands of the ruling “troika”, the President, the Prime Minister, and the Speaker of the Parliament.⁶ Moreover, the absence of a strong adequate system for political parties has increased the political powers of the troika; it shifted most of the political weight into the troika. According to Michael Hudson:

The dysfunctional aspects of government by troika might be alleviated if there were other institutions in place for articulating and channeling political activity. Unfortunately, such institutions are weak or nonexistent. For example, the lack of a strong party system leaves only a weak token “loyal opposition” in parliament, numbering between a dozen and two-dozen deputies, depending on the issue at hand⁷.

Furthermore, political representation is dominated by feudal leaders (zu’ama), property owners, and businesspersons, which Richard Hrair Dekmejian calls “the elite cartel”.⁸ Therefore, in Lebanon, the ideological and non-confessional political parties based on specific political ideas and programs, such as those present in modern democracies, are practically nonexistent.⁹

Many of the “parties” are simply lists of candidates endorsed by a prominent national or local figure. Loose locally organized coalitions, are formed for electoral purposes by negotiation among clan leaders and candidates representing various religious communities; such as coalitions usually exist

⁶ Melhem, Edmond. “Workings and Shortcomings of Lebanese Political System.” Middle East Quarterly, Vol.3, No. 10, 1996, p 34.

⁷ Hudson, Michael C. “Lebanon after Ta’if: Another Reform Opportunity Lost?” Arab Studies Quarterly. Vol.21, i1, Winter 1999, p 27.

⁸ Demekjian, Richard Hrair. “Consociational Democracy in Crisis: The Case of Lebanon.” Comparative Politics, Vol. 10, No. 2, January 1978, p 251.

⁹ Melhem, Edmond. “Workings and Shortcomings of Lebanese Political System.” Middle East Quarterly, Vol. 3, No. 10, 1996, p 34.

*only for the election, and rarely from a coercive bloc in the National Assembly after the election.*¹⁰

Michael Suleiman argues that there are two main types of Lebanese parties. The first part consists of those parties “which are exclusively of Lebanese character, i.e. Which acknowledge the independence, integrity, and well-being of the country within its present borders.”¹¹ Some examples of those political parties are Walid Jumblatt’s Progressive Socialist Party, the Lebanese Phalanges, and the Lebanese Forces. The second types consists of those parties “which advocate and work for a new and different trans-national entity in which Lebanon would be absorbed or fragmented.”¹² Examples of such parties are the Lebanese Communist Party, the Baath Party, and the SSNP. The most obvious characteristics of “exclusively Lebanese parties” are their sectarianism and the very high probability that the leaders of such parties will be chosen on the basis of personal and familial grounds. It seems paradoxical that a party advocates reform by changing some features as to suit their purpose. And although these parties operate under confessionalism, they often seek reform by attempting to subvert some of the negative features of such a political system. In contrast, “trans-national parties” are inclined to take a stand against confessionalism and “ideological-doctrinaire-

¹⁰ Wikipedia Encyclopedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/political_parties_in_lebanon Internet Accessed on April 1, 2008.

¹¹ Suleiman, Michael W. “The Role of Political Parties in a Confessional Democracy: The Lebanese Case.” *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 3, September 1967, p 685.

¹² Ibid, p 685.

totalitarian type, originated as movements or extra-parliamentary groups.”¹³ They show little or no interest in local Lebanese issues rather concentrating on grandiose economic and foreign policy.¹⁴

The above overview of Lebanese parties provides a strong clue as to what has made Hezbollah such a unique political organization in Lebanon. In a sense, Hezbollah has become a third type of political parties in Lebanon a kind of fusion between “exclusively Lebanese parties” and “trans-national parties”, sharing the characteristics of both. Hezbollah shares with the “exclusively Lebanese parties” a common outlook towards sectarianism, the acknowledgement of political system and national boundary. Simultaneously, it also has similarities with “trans-national parties”. For instance, Hezbollah is an ideological party with its religious doctrine, and on the rhetorical level, the party still looks for the establishment of a universal Islamic Umma and refers to Iran for “spiritual” guidance. However, there are some aspects in Hezbollah which neither type of Lebanese parties has. Hezbollah’s possession of arms and its engagement in military activities, as well as its deep commitment to Iran distinguish it from other Lebanese parties.

3. Research Methods

Three combined methods are used in this study: case study, comparative study, and historical study. Case study is a method that involves an in-depth examination of a single instance and event with its unique characteristics and it

¹³ Ibid., p 686.

¹⁴ Ibid., p 690.

is particularly useful to adopt for inspecting the unique and complex phenomenon of Hezbollah's political transformation. There are three advantages of using the case study method. To start with, such a method will provide a clear explanation as to why Hezbollah's transformation pattern occurred as it did. Also, a close observation of the specific case of Hezbollah will lead to certain conclusions and enable us to derive a number of lessons. Moreover, a case study will shed light on the shortcomings and advantages of Hezbollah's transformation, an aspect which might be overlooked in a general study.

In addition, the combination of a number of case studies is mainly useful in clarifying the motives behind the party's transformation and in elucidating the roles of external factors and internal factors in that transformation. Another importance of case studies is that they allow us to compare the political transformation of parties in Western democratic countries, as presented in general literature, to that of Hezbollah.

The comparative study is a method that compares and contrasts more than two instances and events in the history of a country, drawing upon the differences and similarities of such comparison. This method is therefore helpful in understanding what has made Hezbollah's transformation a unique case. In this study, the transformation of Amal, another Lebanese Shiite party is compared with that of Hezbollah. The primary criterion behind choosing Amal movement as a political party to be compared with Hezbollah is that Amal embodies a Lebanese party that has evolved in conditions very similar to Hezbollah's, that is under the

Lebanese system of confessionalism, during the Lebanese war, and within the same regional influences. The Amal movement like Hezbollah is a Lebanese Shiite political organization, and it shares common historical backgrounds, but unlike Hezbollah, Amal followed a different path in its political development and transformation.

The historical study is based mainly on historical research that is gathering and analyzing historical evidence. In this study, three types of historical evidence are used: primary sources, secondary source, and recollections. Primary sources are archival data found in libraries. Secondary sources are those works written by historians. Recollections are autobiographies and memoirs.

4. Hypothesis

The transformation of Hezbollah is best embodied in three major steps that the party has taken: participating in the Lebanese elections, engaging socially in the community, and temporarily diminishing its military aspects. The party's regular participation in the elections and its continuous representation in the Parliament contradict its past political record as an opponent of the Lebanese political system and an advocate of religious resistance and the establishment of an Islamic state. Hezbollah's social activism, as perceived in a number of grass-root organizations and programs that the party has established, demonstrates the party's commitment to the betterment of the Shiite community. The toning down of its

military aspects indicates that the party has changed its confrontational and revolutionary tactics into more accommodating and conventional ones.

Eventhough Hezbollah's organizational transformation into a legitimate political force has been greatly successful, mainly due to the party's participation in elections and representation in the Parliament and government, the party's quest to become a Lebanese political party is yet incomplete. Indeed, Hezbollah still conducts itself as an independent military unit, and its weapons might lead to unrestrained unilateral military activities at any time. No legal national political parties in Lebanon are as officially or openly armed and/or engaged in any form of military conduct beyond Lebanese borders as Hezbollah. And for that reason Hezbollah has been pressured into disarmament. The study will also tackle the subject of Hezbollah's disarmament. It is important to note that this study will cover Hezbollah's activities till the year 2006, including the July War. The latest dramatic events in Lebanon will not be part of this thesis.

III. Significance

This study of Hezbollah's political transformation is significant in the context of rapidly changing regional and international politics. Until July 2006, Hezbollah was gradually shedding its military aspect, and the party had seemed to have endorsed the confessional system, especially if one takes into consideration its regular participation in parliamentary elections in 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2005. However, after the July war, the attitude towards the party's "Lebanization" seems to

have changed and Hezbollah's "Lebanization" was being questioned. Hezbollah is sure to play an important role, yet influence greatly the Lebanese political system. Literature on Hezbollah's attempt to adapt to the Lebanese political system is scarce, and for that reason, this study contributes to a better understanding of current Lebanese politics. Furthermore, the examination of Hezbollah's transformation can aid in to the general study of political parties. Two valuable findings can be extracted from the study. First, political parties are always changing, and second, inclusive political participation promotes political co-operation.

CHAPTER II

THE RISE OF HEZBOLLAH

I. Introduction

Hezbollah emerged in 1982 in the wake of the Israeli military operation in Lebanon as Iran dispatched its Revolutionary Guard to the Lebanese Bekaa. The flood of financial aid, military training, and religious indoctrination that Iran offered to a mixture of nascent Shiite resistance groups ultimately led to the crystallization of Hezbollah as an organization. Iran played the most significant, though not the only, role in the creation of Hezbollah.

Indeed, the appearance of Hezbollah marks the beginning of a new phase in the political development of the Lebanese Shiite community that “has occurred in stages which preceded the Islamic revolution in Iran and Hezbollah’s entry... by several decades.”¹⁵ The party’s evolution reflected the domestic reality of a tendency towards radicalization against turbulent political surroundings and an

¹⁵ Ranstorp, Magnus. *Hizb’allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis*. Forwarded by Terry Waite. Houndsmill, Basingstake, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1997, p 25.

ideological confrontation within the Shiite community of Lebanon, rather than the political design of regional power.¹⁶

At that particular point in time, several negative socio-political factors coalesced to produce a violent rejection of the status quo among the Shiites. These factors resulted from Amal's unsuccessful leadership of the Shiites and its suspicious involvement in politics; Israel's military operations and subsequent invasion which devastated the South; The growing feeling of insecurity in Lebanon due to the intensifying sectarian strife; and the increasing governmental dysfunction towards the newly emerging socio-economic difficulties in the Shiite community. This chapter will thoroughly discuss the emergence of Hezbollah and its activities in the pre-transformation period.

II. Background of the creation of Hezbollah

Hezbollah primarily emerged from the domestic socio-political crisis as a reformational political movement aiming to replace the stagnant established political authority. Before the emergence of Hezbollah, Amal was the primary Shiite political and military organization. At that time, Amal was an innovative movement with clear political visions and goals and under the leadership of its charismatic founder Imam Musa al-Sadr, and for those reasons it had won widespread support

¹⁶ Sivan, Emmanuel. Islamic Radicalism: Sunni and Shiite, in Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East. Eds, Emmanuel Sivan and Manachem Friedman. Amherst NY: State University of New York Press, 1990, p 64.

among the politically awakening Shiite youths. However, under the leadership of Nabih Berri, Amal quickly plunged into pervasive corruption and nepotism. Berri's cooperation with the Lebanese government then-led by Bachir Gemayyel, a figure whom many Shiites viewed as pro-Israel, and his compromising policy towards Israeli attacks, led Amal to further deterioration. Hassan Nasrallah, the current Leader of Hezbollah, described the reasons behind his leaving Amal in words that echo the general discontentment of other numerous Shiites who had defected from the party:

When I left Amal, I was a member of the party's Central Committee. I left Amal in 1982 after the Israeli invasion because I was among those who wanted armed resistance against the Israeli occupation.¹⁷

Besides the disappointment with Amal and the domestic political crisis, three other events led to further radicalization within the Shiite community, and set the stage for the emergence of Hezbollah. The first was the first Israeli invasion of 1978, designed to destroy PLO bases in South Lebanon and widen the so-called security buffer zone. Since the Palestinians had already retreated from the South at the time of the operation, the main victims of this severe attack were, once again, the Shiites.¹⁸ The second event was the sudden disappearance of Imam Musa al-Sadr in Libya in August 1978. This mysterious incident led to his occultation as

¹⁷ Eqbal, Ahmad: <<http://www.weekly.ahram.org.eg/1998/388/re4.htm>> "Encounter with a Fighter." *Al Ahram Weekly*, no.388, 30 July-5 August 1998. Accessed May 2008.

¹⁸ Fisk, Robert. *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p 264.

the Twelfth Imam and played a large role in strengthening the faith of the Shiites.¹⁹ The third and final event was the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in January 1979, and the subsequent continuous Iranian support of Hezbollah.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was another powerful catalyst for Hezbollah's emergence. It is estimated to have caused nearly 18,000 deaths and the Lebanese government claimed ten billion dollars in damage.²⁰ As Yitzhak Rabin, then Israel's Defense Minister, predicted the worst consequence of the Israeli invasion was that "let the Shiite genie out of the bottle". The large-scale and relentless destruction of the South generated the perfect hotbed of radicalization and militarization for the Shiites who, more than any other community in Lebanon had suffered from the Israeli invasion.²¹

The Shiites' despair led them to become completely self-reliant in order to meet their communal socio-political needs, which the then-defunct Lebanese government could not handle.²² The funds and the weapons they received from Iran enabled the party to win popular support. It was reportedly said that some Hezbollah officials agree that Hezbollah was, by a large measure, "created" by Israel: "without

¹⁹ <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,961959,00.html>> 20 February 1984, p 21. Accessed May 2008

²⁰ Scott, MacLeod. "Israeli 'Iron Fist': Deterrence or Revenge?" *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2000.

²¹ Smith, William. "Emergence of the Shiite Genie." *Time*, 4 March 1985, p 44.

²² Ranstorp, Magnus. *Hizb'allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis*. Forward by Terry Waite. Houndsmill, Basingstake, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1997, p 14.

the strong will of opposing the occupation, Hezbollah would not have been able to build a broad Shiite constituency”.²³ This psychological upheaval of the Shiite community converged with both the ambitions of pro-Khomeini extremists, educated in Najaf of Iraq, and the regional political interests of Iran and Syria. Combination of these factors paved the way for the emergence of Hezbollah.

III. Iranian and Syrian Factors

Iran dispatched the Iranian Revolutionary Guard to Lebanon with the purpose of exporting the Islamic Revolution to Lebanese soil and taking hold over the large Shiite community there. Iran had long shared with the Lebanese Shiite community a centuries of cultural and religious osmosis,” and in interest in supporting and backing the resistance against Israel.²⁴ Iran never did conceal its animosity towards Israel, as the latter had cooperated with the Shah regime and was considered to be a proxy of the US. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard, with its abundant financial aid and military training, played a pivotal role in tangibly bringing Hezbollah into existence. It was “largely composed of military instructors and fighters. It also included senior clergy who intensively indoctrinated Hezbollah

²³ Norton, Augustus Richard. “Hizballah and the Israeli Withdrawal from Southern Lebanon.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.30, No.1, 2 October 2000, p 27.

²⁴Dekmejian, Richard H. *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World*. Syracuse NY: Southern University Press, 1995, p 166.

and Amal cadres, starting from the age of four, with the religio-political teachings of Ayatollah Khomeini.”²⁵

If Iran is to be considered the prime driving force behind the materialization of Hezbollah, Syria should be considered the cooperative facilitator. It was the Syrian army who “actually transported the Iranian-supplied weaponry, as well as additional material and logistical support to Hezbollah. Hezbollah’s military camps are located in the northern Bekaa, an area which was strictly controlled by the Syrian armed forces.”²⁶ Syria had allowed Iran to dispatch the Revolutionary Guard to the Bekaa for strategic purposes. It had assumed that Iran’s presence in the Bekaa would be expedient; firstly, it would undermine the threat of an invading Israeli army and growing American leverage in the region, and secondly, it would weaken the initial welcoming that the Israeli army had enjoyed among the Shiite in the South.²⁷ Thirdly, the Iranian factor would cripple “erstwhile Lebanese allies who might be tempted to distance themselves from Damascus.”²⁸ Moreover, Syria had acquiesced to the foundation of Hezbollah’s resistance movement since Syria was committed to the Palestinian cause from a Baathist Pan-Arab perspective, and because Syria could

²⁵ Ranstorp, Magnus. Hizb’allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis. Forward by Terry Waite. Houndsmill, Basingstake, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1997, p 34.

²⁶ Atlas, Yedida. “Hezbollah: ‘Party of God’ Wages war with ‘Great Satan.’” Insight on the News, 1 Septembre 1997, p 22.

²⁷ Gambill, Gary C. and Ziad K. Abdelnour. Middle East Intelligence Bulletin, Vol. 4 No. 2, February 2002.

²⁸ Norton, Augustus Richard. “Hizballah and the Israeli Withdrawal from Southern Lebanon.” Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol.30, No.1, 2 October 2000, p 117.

use Hezbollah as a tactical conduit to exert pressure on Israel in order to liberate the Golan Heights.²⁹

IV. Organizational structure

Unlike Amal, a sectarian Shiite organization, Hezbollah as a religious movement, is strictly committed to the rule of Islam.³⁰ The name derives from a verse in the Quran that promises triumph for those who join the “party of God.”³¹ In 1985, Hezbollah officially announced its political debut in an open manifesto. Asserting that Islam is the solution and source of inspiration and mobilization of the resistance, and hailing the supreme authority of Khomeini.³² The religious concepts of martyrdom and holy war became essential component of Hezbollah’s resistance war against Israel and the West.³³

In the manifesto, Hezbollah’s oath of waging a holy war against Israel and the West draws particular attention, especially as it highlights the party’s attitude towards the West. Hezbollah proclaims, “America, France and their allies must leave

²⁹ Trendle, Giles. Hezbollah : Pragmatism and Popular Standing. Eds., Rosemary Hollis and Nadim Shehadi. Lebanon on Hold: Implications for Middle East Peace, London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996, p 64.

³⁰ Schebley, Ayla Hammond. Religious Resurgence and Religious Terrorism: A Study of the Actions of the Shi’a Sectarian Movement in Lebanon. Ph.D. Austin: University of North Texas, U.M.I, 1998, p 24.

³¹ Wright, Robin. Sacred Rage: The Wrath of Militant Islam. New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1985, p 82.

³² Gambill, Gary C. and Ziad K. Abdelnour. Middle East Intelligence Bulletin. Vol. 4 No. 2, February 2002.

³³ Wieseltier, Leon. “The Wrong War: Israel meets Iran in Lebanon.” The New Republic, 8 April 1985, p 9.

Lebanon once and for all... We are dealing with evil at its roots and its roots are in America.”³⁴ Such an attitude towards the west explains the series of hostage taking, hijackings, and murders targeting Westerners during the 1980s. Furthermore, the manifesto revealed an antipathy and hatred towards the Lebanese Phalanges by noting that the Phalanges “*must be tried... for their crimes against Moslems and Christians, which were encouraged by America and Israel.*”³⁵

Although expelling foreign presence from Lebanon was one of Hezbollah’s major political goals, its principal and first objective was to conduct resistance against Israeli occupation.³⁶ Hezbollah believed that it could drive Israel out of Lebanon, and then Israel’s departure would be the prelude to its obliteration and the liberation of occupied Jerusalem. Also, Hezbollah sought to establish an Islamic Shiite state in the region that starts in Lebanon and extends beyond it, emulating the Iranian model of Wilayat al-Faqeeh, to be discussed in chapter 3.

Until recently, Hezbollah relied considerably on its invisible organizational structure. The only thing known about Hezbollah was that the party had a Shura Council (consultative) and a number of active committees. However, with the latest change in Hezbollah’s political aims, the party was required to expose its organizational structure to the public. By observing the various activities of the

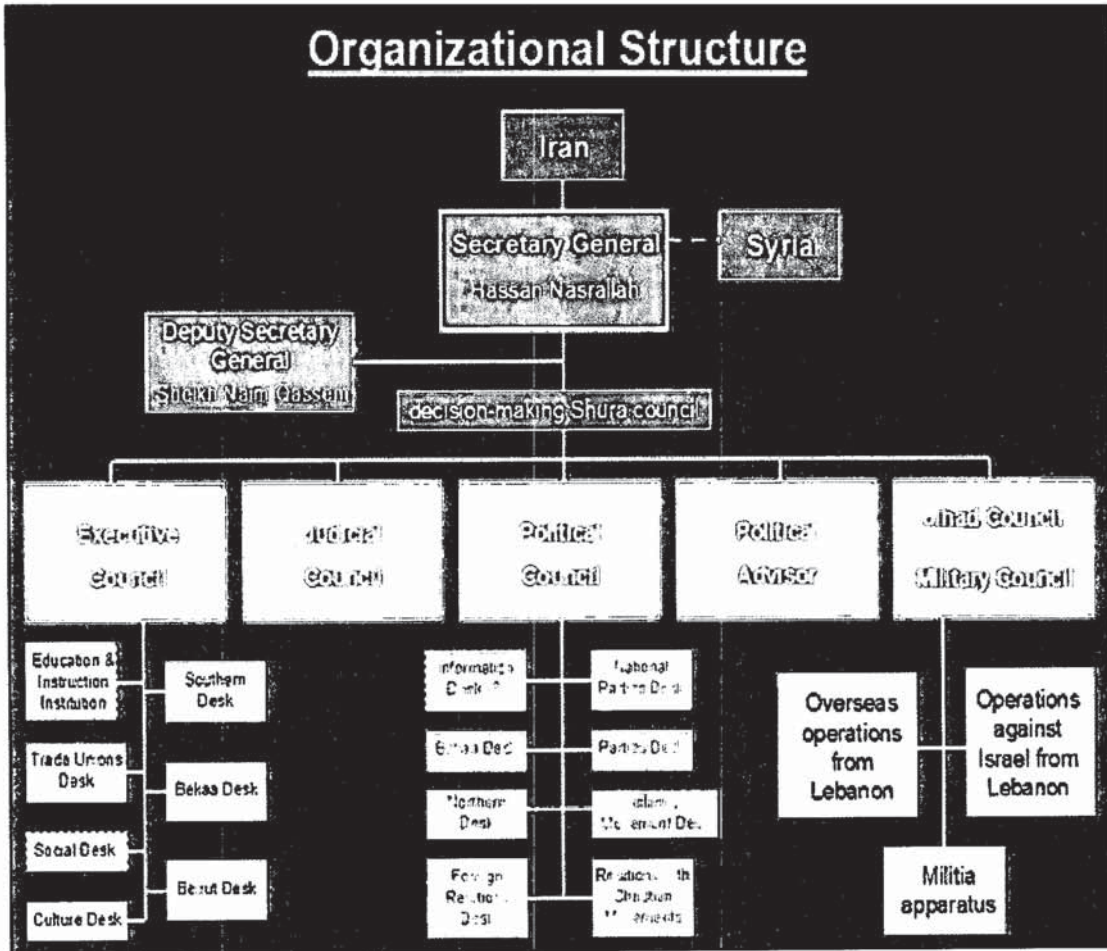
³⁴ Reed, Stanly. “When they hate us.” *The Nation*, 14 February 1987, p 168.

³⁵ Ibid, p 168.

³⁶ Eqbal, Ahmad: <[http:// www.weekly.ahram.org.eg /1998/388/re4.htm](http://www.weekly.ahram.org.eg/1998/388/re4.htm) > “Encounter with a Fighter.” *Al Ahram Weekly*, no.388, 30 July-5August 1998. Accessed May 2008.

party, as revealed in its publications and in other newspapers, one can sketch a general scheme of Hezbollah's organizational structure (see figure 1).

Figure1.³⁷



<[http:// www.google.com/Hezbollah/organization](http://www.google.com/Hezbollah/organization) >Accessed May 2008

In contrast to Amal movement, which was founded and led by one individual, Imam Musa al-Sadr, Hezbollah is led by a collective leadership rather

³⁷<[http:// www.google.com/Hezbollah/organization](http://www.google.com/Hezbollah/organization) > Accessed on May 2008.

than by one charismatic personality. The emphasis on the role of the Ulama in the society, a fundamental feature of Shiite Islam, is also crucial to Hezbollah's structure.

Structurally, the party (Hizb) is headed by a Supreme Shura Council. The council is composed of 17 members. Most of them are clergies such as Sayyid Ibrahim al-Amin, Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah (the present Secretary General), Shaykh Naim Qassim, Shaykh Mouhammad Yazbik, and Shaykh Abu Salem Yaghi. Ayatollah Shaykh Fadlallah, another clergy who used to be called in the past "al-Murshid al-Ruhi" the spiritual guide of Hezbollah is primarily a marja', an eminent religio-legal authority who, as he puts it himself not interfere in the organizational framework of the party. In addition to the clergy, the party consists of a group of security and para-military leaders. Many of those members such as Muhammad Hassan al-Askari and Ahmad Sadiqi are of Iranian nationality. However, it is mainly the clergy who influence the final decision of the Council. The Supreme Shura Council being the highest authority in the party is charged with legislative, executive, judicial, political, and military affairs and with the overall administrative work of the party. Decisions made by the Council are reached either unanimously or by following the votes of the majority. In the case of deadlock, matters are referred to Wali al-Faqeh Ali Akbar Kamene'i who is the supreme jurisconsult in Iran. In other words, if a decision is not approved by the Supreme Shura Council, then it is not considered legitimate.

The actual operation of the party is entrusted to a Secretariat headed by a Secretary General and his deputy. The two are usually members of the Supreme Shura Council, and they are appointed by it. The Secretary General is the *ex-officio* chairman of the Executive Committee which is composed of the various heads of districts (akaleem) along with five members named and appointed by the Supreme Shura Council. The districts are: Beirut, the Southern suburbs, the South, and the Beqaa. Each district has a Council called the Regional Shura Council, which is directly linked to the Supreme Shura Council through one of its members. Its main function is to follow up the day-to-day activities and needs of the district.

Hezbollah's politburo is not a decision-making committee but rather a supervisory one which coordinates the work of the party's other committees. It consists of 15 members. Its chairman used to be al-Hajj Hussein al-Khalil (the former operation commander of Hezbollah's security branch), at least six members of the Politburo are representatives in the Lebanese Parliament; namely: Sayyid Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyid, Ali Hassan Taha, Shaykh Khoder Ali Tlays, al-Hajj Muhammad Fnaysh, al-Hajj Muhammad Ra'ad, and al-Hajj Muhammad Ahmad Berjawi. Today, the Politburo representatives are: Hassan Fadlallah, al-Hajj Hussein Hajj Hassan, al-Hajj Ali Ammar, al-Hajj Muhammad Fnaysh, al-Hajj Muhammad Ra'ad, al-Hajj Muhammad Ahmad Berjawi, al-Hajj Ibrahim el Sayyid, and al-Hajj Amine Cherri.

V. Resistance, hostage taking, and suicide bombing

During the 1980s, Hezbollah was condemned by Americans and other western states for taking part in several radical operations during the regional and domestic political upheavals. In the South, Hezbollah's armed resistance developed in earnest against the occupying Israeli forces and the pro-Israel Southern Lebanese Army. In order to expel Western forces from Lebanon, Hezbollah resorted to a series of kidnappings and subsequent hostage taking of Westerners and it also conducted massive suicide attacks against several Western representatives, precisely Israeli, American, and French representatives.

As a conclusion, because Hezbollah had its own distinctive tactics, its rise as a religious fundamentalist movement started a new era in Lebanese politics. The party's involvement in Lebanese politics changed the course of politics not only in Lebanon, but in the whole region.

CHAPTER III

THE IDEOLOGY OF HEZBOLLAH

I. Introduction

The ideology of Hezbollah has alternated between working actively on establishing a fully Islamic country in Lebanon following the Iranian model, and waiting until the dynamics of the internal factors in Lebanon achieve such a goal. Moreover, Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah has recently stated, and that after his alliance with General Michel Aoun, leader of the reform and change movement, that the party no longer seeks to transform Lebanon into an Islamic Shiite state, insisting that the country is for all its citizens.

Hezbollah has its own view of the world, a view that does not distinguish between secular and religious actions or factors. Partisans of Hezbollah depend greatly on the Imam for guidance. While waiting for the return of the hidden Imam, the nation has to find a way to manage its daily life, and that is how the concept of al-Marjaiah or the referral authority came.

Moreover, because Hezbollah refers to Wilayat al-Faqeeh to interpret its world vision, the party seems to have adopted the Takiah concept³⁸. And because of that, the party seems to be simply seeking political power. Between being part of a nation-state and having another source of legitimacy, Hezbollah is adopting what we call “the strategy of Artichoke.”

II. Hezbollah’s “artichoke strategy”?

The artichoke is a kind of vegetable that is eaten after it is boiled in hot water. But, the way in which the artichoke is eaten is significant. Because it is formed of multi-layers leaves, one has to peel the leaves, layer after layer in order to get to the pulp, the essence or core³⁹.

It seems that Hezbollah has been doing an outstanding job so far. To start with, Hezbollah created and earned its legitimacy on the national level by resisting and defeating the common enemy Israel, and eventually forcing it to withdraw from southern Lebanon in May 2000. In addition to this, Hezbollah was able to maintain the power and popular acclaim it has gained from these events by eliminating all other militia groups, even the secular ones, earning the name of Islamic Resistance.

³⁸ Makarem, Sami. Al Taqia fi al-Islam. Druze Heritage Foundation, London: 2004, p 87.

³⁹ Saad-Ghorayeb, Amal. Hizbullah: Politics and Religion. Critical Studies on Islam. London: Pluto Press, 2001, p 95.

Also, Hezbollah has worked hard to promote Islamic culture, especially the Shiite one, by creating a new culture instead of the one that was the cornerstone of the Lebanese National Pact of 1943, the new culture promoted by Hezbollah stresses on national consensus and equity among the various confessional constituents of Lebanon.

This chapter will attempt to explain how Hezbollah gained its legitimacy and its control over the Shiite Lebanese community in the hope to metamorphose Lebanon into an Islamic country one day.

III. The Shiites⁴⁰

The Shiites are the followers of Ali known as the “Shias” (partisans) of Ali. Although they emerged as a political group, the Shiites or Shiite Muslims developed into a sect with its initially specific ideologies and doctrines. A key event in the history of the Shiites is the tragic death of Hussein, the son of Ali and Muhammad’s daughter Fatima in the battle of Karbala. Hussein had refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the rule of Mou’awiya’s son, Umayyad Yazid, and was on his way to rally support for his cause in the City of Kufah when he was murdered. Because his plans were exposed before he arrived at Kufah, a large Umayyad army met him and seventy members of his family at the outskirts of the city. The Umayyads let Hussein choose between a humiliating submission to their

⁴⁰ <http://www.mb-soft.com/believe/txo/shiites.htm> Accessed on May 2008.

rule or a battle that would eventually lead to his definite death. Hussein chose to fight, and all the members of his family with him were massacred. The incident marked the beginning of the history of the Shiites.

IV. The Twelve Shiia Imams

The twelve Shiia, or “Ithna-Acharyya”, is the largest of the Shiite Muslim sects. They believe that legitimate Islamic leadership is vested in a line of descent that extends from Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law, Ali, to Ali’s two sons, al-Hassan and al-Hussein, and then to al-Hussein’s descendants. The personalities mentioned before were the first of the twelve Imams or leaders of the Shiite Muslim community. The Shiites believe that Muhammad designated all twelve successors by name. Also, they believe that these successors have inherited a special knowledge of the true meaning of the scripture, and that knowledge was passed on from father to son, beginning with the prophet himself. Muhammad’s family, along with its loyal followers had political authority over the Shiites⁴¹.

V. The Imam

The Imam, in general terms, is the political head of the Muslim community and its religious head, the person who leads prayer services. The prophet Muhammad and his early successors, including those of the Umayyad caliphate, performed both functions; the head of state himself led the Friday prayers in the

⁴¹ <http://www.cfr.org/publication> Accessed on May 2008.

central capital mosque, while governors did the same in provincial capitals. Later, however, the administrative and political functions were separated from the religious one.

To the Shiites, the term Imam applies to the person who is both the political and religious leader. The Imam must be a descendant of Ali and Fatima (the son-in-law and daughter of the prophet Muhammad). No Imam, however, except Ali, ever ruled. All Imams, starting from the sixth Imam, Jafar al-Sadiq, eschewed political power. The Imam is regarded by the main body of twelver Shiites as immune from errors and sins, and by the Ismailis, a minor Shiite sect, as a veritable incarnation of God. Both sects believe the last Imam to be in occultation and await his return.

According to the mainstream Shiites (the Twelver Shiites) there have been twelve Imams who have succeeded the Prophet Muhammad. They are: Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad (d. 661); al-Hassan (d. 670); al-Hussein (d. 680); Ali Zayn al-Abidin (d. 713); Muhammad al-Baqir (d. 733); Jafar al-Sadiq (d. 765); Mussa al-Kazim (d. 799); Ali al-Rida (d. 818); Muhammad al-Jawad (d. 835); Ali al-Hadi (d. 868); Hassan al-Askari (d. 874); and Muhammad al-Mahdi.⁴² The Shiites expect that the Mahdi will come and liberate them from their enemies, and that he will fight a battle against all people who don't believe in Shiite Islam.

⁴² Ibid. Accessed on May 2008.

VI. Other Shiite sects

The Shiites firmly believe in the infallibility, sinlessness, and divine right to authority of the descendants of Ali, the Imams. The main bodies of Shiites recognize twelve Imams and are called the “Twelvers”; the Ismailis recognize seven and are called the “Seveners”; whereas the Zaidis recognize only five Imams and are therefore called the “Fivers”. The last Imam had disappeared in 880, and to this day, Shiites await his return, as they believe that justice will be restored in the world upon his return.⁴³

VII. Adherents

Not all Shiites believe in the Twelve Imams. In 1980, the number of those who believed in the twelve Imams, the Twelvers, was estimated to be around 72,750,000. Important Shiite communities can be found in the following countries: Iran (34,000,000); Pakistan (12,000,000); India (10,000,000); Iraq (10,000,000); the former Soviet Union (4,000,000); Turkey (1,500,000); Afghanistan (1,300,000); Lebanon (1,000,000); Kuwait (270,000); Saudi Arabia (400,000); Bahrain (160,000); and Syria (200,000). Also, small Shiite communities can be found in Europe, Africa, North and South America, and Australia and New Zealand (Momen, 1985, 282).

These numbers, and although they are thought to be old, do in fact reflect the geographical distribution of the Shiites in the Arab world, a distribution

⁴³ Ibid. Accessed on May 2008

that justifies Jordan's King Abdullah's fear of a Shiite crescent that would threaten the Sunnis⁴⁴.

According to Wikipedia online encyclopedia, The Shiite population in the world was estimated to be about 143,771,000 in 2008. Nowadays the major Shiite communities can be found in the following countries: Iran (61,800,000); Pakistan (33,200,000); India (11,000,000); Iraq (17,400,000); Azerbaijan (6,000,000); Afghanistan (5,900,000); Lebanon (1,700,000); Kuwait (730,000); Saudi Arabia (4,000,000); Bahrain (520,000); Syria (1,190,000); UAE (160,000); Qatar (140,000); Oman (31,000). As in 1980, major Shiite communities can also be found in Europe, Africa, North and South America, and Australia and New Zealand.⁴⁵ It is estimated that the Shiite population represents 10% of the total Islamic population.

VIII. Wilayat al-Faqeeh

1. The origins of the concept of Wilayat al-Faqeeh

Khomeini's theory of Wilayat al-Faqeeh is predicated on his belief in the necessity of establishing an Islamic republic. According to Khomeini, it is necessary to await the Mahdi's return for the restoration of justice on earth. Khomeini's logic deems, God could not have possibly limited the validity of his laws

⁴⁴ Ibid. Accessed on May 2008

⁴⁵ Wikipedia Encyclopedia.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/political_parties_in_lebanon Internet Accessed on May 2008.

to such a short period as 200 years. The very existence of these laws posits the existence of an Islamic government for their enforcement. Moreover, “the need for a government to spread justice, to teach and educate, to preserve order, to remove unrighteousness, and to defend the frontiers” is also interpreted by Khomeini as an indication of the crucial need for an Islamic state something which God could not have possibly overlooked.⁴⁶ Hence, Khomeini theorized that an Islamic government should exist to implement divine laws expressed in Koranic scripts. The next issue Khomeini handled was the political leadership of this state, a leadership that would necessarily implement the divine will.

Having established the compelling need for an Islamic state governed by the Shari’a, Khomeini goes on to argue that such a state can only be led by someone well versed in the Shari’a and accomplished in Islamic jurisprudence, the Faqih. Referring to several religious sources, he claims that the religious erudition of the jurists would qualify them as competent enough to inherit the political as well as the religious authority of the Prophet and Imams during the Greater Occultation.

One such source is the Koranic injunction “obey God and the messenger and those in authority among you” (Koran, 4:62), which Khomeini construes as a divine proclamation of the Fuqaha’ (plural of Faqeeh).

Of a particular significance is Khomeini’s interpretation of the saying attributed to the twelfth Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi who proclaimed that in his

⁴⁶ <http://www.mb-soft.com/believe/txo/shiites.htm> Accessed on May 2008

absence the following applies: “As for the events which may occur, refer to the transmitters of our sayings... ”. The operative phrase here is “events which may occur”, which Khomeini expounds as meaning, social and political issues, as opposed to unprecedented legal issues. As a matter of fact, the jurists’ (Fuqaha) political authority is believed to emanate directly from the hidden Imam.

Notwithstanding the delegation of the hidden Imam’s political authority to the Fuqaha’, the role of “de facto functional Imam” can also be seen as a culmination of the historical development of Nai’ib al-Amm (Deputy General) concept, which was advanced by the prominent Shiite scholar, Shaykh Zaynu’d-Din ibn ‘Ali al-Juba’i, known as Shaheed al-Thani (the Second Martyr), in the sixteenth century. As propounded by Shiite scholars, the “ulama” (religious class) were the rightful inheritors of the hidden Imam’s religious prerogative that is the collection and distribution of religious taxes and the declaration of defensive jihad.

It was not until the late eighteenth century that the “Usuli” (fundamentalist) school of jurisprudence, which championed the practice of “ijtihad” (legal rationalism) in Shiite jurisprudence, triumphed over the conservative Akhbari School which opposed it. It was then that the theoretical functions of the Na’ib al-Amm (Deputy General) were finally assumed by the jurists (Fuqaha). The “mujtahid” or “faqih” was thereby enabled to deliver “fatwas” (religious edicts) on

almost any social or personal issue, which were to be adhered to by the “muqallid” (follower)⁴⁷.

IX. Hezbollah and Wilayat al-Faqeeh

Insofar, an adherence to Wilayat al-Faqeeh constitutes a mandatory condition to be admitted to Hezbollah and a prerequisite to participate in the executive branch of the ideal Islamic state, Wilayat al-Faqeeh is a fundamental element of Hezbollah’s intellectual structure.

According to Sheikh Naim Qassem, the Deputy Secretary of Hezbollah, in his book “*Hezbollah*”, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the Iranian Revolution, were the prime reasons behind the creation of the party of God, Hezbollah. Prior to the 1982 Israeli invasion, no Islamic organization was ready to fight the enemy, and for those reasons Hezbollah emerged.⁴⁸

And Sheikh Qassem continues in his book:

During this time, in 1979, the Iranian Revolution led by Ayatullah Khomeini succeeded, drawing the faithful closer to Islam. Massive support was evident in demonstrations organized under the banner of “Supportive Committees of the Islamic Revolution in Iran”, movements which eventually opened channels with the pillars of the young Islamic government in Iran, at the head of which was the religious leader of the Islamic Umma, the Jurist Theologian (al-wali alfaqih), Ayatollah Khomeini.⁴⁹ Thirst for an Islamic revolution

⁴⁷ Norton, Augustus Richard. “Hezbollah: a Short History.” Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics. p 135.

⁴⁸ Qassem, Naim. “Hezbollah: The Story from Within.” 2005, p 18-25.
<<http://www.naimkassem.org/materials/books/hizbullah/hizbullah.htm>>.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p 18.

came in tandem with a rising and insistent need for political revitalization in a country like Lebanon, a need that was not fulfilled by practical Islamic activity at the time of the Revolution. Perhaps the circumstances surrounding the Najaf clerical teachings in Lebanon and the nature of their concerns, together with the rise of youth activity, resulted in a dominance of intellectual and cultural aspects. Such was markedly different from the teachings and concerns of Qum clerics, who were inspired by an effective and influential political experience that culminated in the creation of a modern Islamic state in Iran.

Sheikh Qassem considered that the Shiites were going through some kind of “awakening”. For a long time, they had been marginalized both in the history of Lebanon, as well as in the Sunni world.

The Israeli invasion in 1982 enabled the Shiites to assert themselves, locally and regionally, and to identify themselves with the Iranian Revolution. At that time, Iran was looking for a way to dismantle the American containment in the region, the best way to do so was by creating a proxy, namely Hezbollah, that would increase its influence in the region and minimize American control.

Sheikh Naim Qassem continues to explain the main ideological tenets of the Party of God. He stresses on the following point:

Israel invaded Lebanon, Groups of faithful Muslim men participated in confrontations at the outskirts of Beirut, collaborating with the Syrian army and a few Palestinian and Lebanese resistance fighters. Their efforts succeeded in slowing down Israel’s advancement towards Beirut. However, none of the Islamic factions had been prepared for such a mission. The concern for and need to find a united Islamic organization surfaced. Such an organization, if it were to be found, had to rest on three pivotal objectives:

- 1. Islam being the comprehensive, complete, and appropriate course for a better life, It ought to be the intellectual, religious, ideological, and practical foundation for the proposed organization.*

2. Resistance of Israel's occupation, an occupation which is threatening both the present and future, should receive a priority for immediate confrontation, given the anticipated disastrous effects of such an occupation on Lebanon and the region. This priority for immediate confrontation necessitated the call for a "Jihad" (holy war) structure that could enforce the obligation of confronting Israel, and make sure that all capacities are employed for such a purpose.

3. The legitimate leadership is necessarily assigned to the Jurist-Theologian perceived as the successor to the Prophet and Imams. The Jurist-Theologian draws the general guiding directions for Islamic nation, and his commands and proscriptions can be enforced⁵⁰.

As a matter of fact, not all Shiites share the same political view; while some Shiites favor secular government, others still insist on a religious government. Even among those same Shiites advocating a religious government, four distinct approaches can be found: those favoring the dictatorship of the Mullahs, those proposing supervision by the Mullah, those calling for the implementation of the Quietest Approach, and those preferring Secularism.

1. The dictatorship of the Mullahs and Wilayat al-Faqeeh

Wilayat al-Faqeeh stands for Ayatollah Khomeini's concept, as now practiced in Iran. According to this concept, governments elected by the people should not be given ultimate authority. For many practical reasons, civil governments must still exist. Nonetheless, legislative, executive, and judicial matters are still overseen by the "jurisprudence". To be able to understand better how the concept works, it is necessary to know the meaning of the Arabic terms that

⁵⁰ Saad-Ghorayeb, Amal. *Hizbullah: Politics and Religion*. Critical Studies on Islam. London: Pluto Press, 2001, p 55.

exemplify it. The “Faqih” is a Muslim religious scholar and cleric whose expertise in Shari’a Laws qualifies him to a broad authority in the Shiite community: he is the “jurisprudent”, also called “Mullah” in the Western press. The term “Faqih” literally means “guardianship, trusteeship, or governance”. In practice, the clerics call all the shots, whence the phrase “dictatorship of the Mullahs,” literally translated as “guardianship of the jurisprudent”. The phrase “dictatorship of the Mullahs” stands for the literal translation of “Wilayat al-Faqeh”, although Shiite clerics do not necessarily admit it.

2. Supervision of the Mullah

In the late 1950s, and in reaction to dominant secularism in the Arab world, Shiite clerics in Najaf in Iraq, called the “Hawza”, advocated a strict, Islamic government, in which the state would conform to “Shari’a” Law, but would be secular in its composition. Such a view recognized the legitimate authority of assemblies elected by the people, but held that any elected government must follow Islamic principles. Drawing an analogy between such a government and American politics, the “Shari’a” Law would be the equivalent of the constitution, and the clerics would represent the judicial branch, whose goal is to supervise and interpret the laws, ensuring their conformity with Islam. Although, the “supervision of the Mullah” is perceived by Westerners as an unacceptable mixture of “mosque and state”, it is much different from the first Khomeini approach. While in “Wilayat al-Faqeh”, clerics are given full control over the three authorities, in the “supervision of the Mullah”, they are given control over one.

The “Da’wa” Party, a Shiite Iraqi party, is an example of a party who publicly advocates secularism, for electoral purposes, but inwardly adheres to “Wilayat al-Faqeeh”.

At the end, it is worth noting that Khomeini launched Wilayat al-Faqeeh after the “Hawza” and “al-Da’wa” initiated the fundamentalist Shiite movement in the late 1950s. As a matter of fact, he had built his ideas on theirs. In essence, Khomeini told “Hawza” and “al-Da’wa” parties: “Good idea, but you didn’t take it to its logical conclusion⁵¹.”

3. The Quietist Approach

The Quietist Approach represents the traditional stance of the Shiite religious authorities in Najaf, which include the most influential Shiite cleric today, Ayatollah al-Sistani. Such a view holds that, until the return of the hidden Imam, the secular authorities should remain in charge of their sphere, while the clerical authorities should stay in charge of theirs. The Quietist Approach does allow clerics enough social authority; but not actual interference in the government operation or law-making.

Ever since the Americans overthrew Saddam Hussein in Iraq, al-Sistani has been pushing the Quietist Approach to the breaking point. What al-Sistani seems to be saying is “let us be part of the government for time being, and so, when the hidden Mahdi returns, we will be sure to spread our religion”.

⁵¹ Ibid, p 55.

4. Secularism

Many Shiites are mainly secular, just like most Americans and Europeans. They practice a particular faith, without having to adhere to its every principle, but they depend upon the government and other secular institutions to play the leading role in society.

X. Conclusion

Not all the Shiites are fundamentalist or religious jihadists. After the Iranian Revolution, the creation of Hezbollah, and the Israeli withdrawal from Southern Lebanon in May 2000, a major ideological change occurred within the Shiite nation. Shiites began to regard themselves as a separate sect from the Sunnis, rather than part of the Arab nation.

Moreover, they began to be legitimately acknowledged within the Sunni world, since they stood and faced the historical enemy, Israel. Prior to the liberation of Southern Lebanon, almost all the Arab states, secular military organizations, and PLO consisting mainly of Sunnis, had given up fighting Israel.

In addition, a “generational” shift had accompanied the ideological shift. The rising Shiite generations have different paradigms, a new worldview, and want to be the vanguard of Islam, paving the way for the return of the twelfth hidden Imam from his grand hid out.

In order to achieve such goals, the new Shiite generation has begun acquiring power. On the other hand, ideology, money, connections, and arms, especially unconventional ones seem to be the main tools for the rising Shiite nation. Lebanon, on the other hand, seems to be one of the major theaters of operation of such a huge project.

CHAPTER IV

PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS

I. Introduction

Hezbollah's participation in the Lebanese elections contributed greatly in modifying the party's political outlook. First, it articulated Hezbollah's full embracement of the existing Lebanese politics, which is the confessional system based on a Maronite-Sunni axis. The confessional system is the very system that Hezbollah had vehemently rejected earlier because of its fixed and unfair distribution of power. Indeed, Hezbollah's acceptance of the established political system can be interpreted as the party's acknowledgement of state authority and willingness to coexist with other sectarian communities. Judith Harik maintains that Hezbollah could predict that its acceptance of the established Lebanese system would enable it to carry its armed struggle against Israel under the title of "National Resistance."⁵²

Furthermore, Hezbollah's joining the elections implied that the party had completely abandoned one of its most uncompromising political objectives: establishing an Islamic state in Lebanon that emulates the Iranian model of Wilayat

⁵² Harik, Judith Palmer. Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004, p 47.

al-Faqeeh. In other words, the religious priority of the party was temporarily put aside, so that the party could gain political power.⁵³

Moreover, the participation in elections provided the party with a national “Lebanese” legitimacy. Elections marked a great shift in the party’s stand, for Hezbollah had previously sworn allegiance to Iran, a foreign power, and embraced the idea of an Islamic state that does not coincide with the known concepts of nationalism. In other words, the party has done its best to convince the Lebanese that it had narrowed down its political ambitions and activities to the boundaries of the state.

Also, participating in Lebanese politics as a legal Lebanese political party has provided Hezbollah with political legitimacy, or at least the veneer of legitimacy, a cover that Hezbollah has long sought deeming it essential to its survival.

The fact that Hezbollah has depended upon ballot boxes rather than military power to gain political power and representation suggests that the party has become legally-bound and constitutionally-oriented. Moreover, Hezbollah’s electoral competition indicates that the party potentially conforms to democratic attributes. Although participating in elections does not necessarily endow any party with the certificate of “good conduct” and “democracy” by Western standards, electoral

⁵³ Chartouni-Dubarry, May. *Hezbollah: from Militia to Political Party*, in Lebanon on Hold. Eds. Rosemary Hollis and Nadim Shehadi. London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996, p 60.

participation is still considered a positive sign, an indication that the party is capable of operating in a democratic political system.

Finally, taking part in the elections has transformed Hezbollah from an elitist party that places its decision-making authority in the hands of a few selected clerics, to a more egalitarian popular party. As in Hezbollah's case, usually, and in order to win elections, a party has to attract as broad a support as possible from its partisans, therefore rendering it more dependent on the masses.

Significantly, this new strategy of electoral participation yielded the necessity for a change in the party's organizational structure. In August 1995, a new political organ called "Majlis al-Kutla al-Niyabiyya" (The Parliamentary Bloc Council) was established. It consisted of Hezbollah's deputies.⁵⁴ The politburo, "which was assigned to deal with political matters, in particular relations with other political organizations," was renamed as the Political Council and given direct executive responsibilities.⁵⁵

The following part will present an analysis of the party's behavior in Lebanese elections, drawing on its participation in elections, and examining its integration in the Lebanese political system. It will also examine the Parliamentary elections of 1992, 1996, and 2000. A particular attention will be given to the 1992 elections, since these were the first elections in which Hezbollah participated.

⁵⁴ Quoted in The Lebanon Report, *Al-Safir*, No.3, 8 August 1995, p 31.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p 31.

However, one must keep in mind that at that time, the Lebanese elections were controlled and manipulated by Syria in its attempt to reduce the Lebanese Christians' political weight. In other words, Hezbollah was acting as a tool to help Syria fulfill its plans in Lebanon.

II. The 1992 elections

The 1992 parliamentary elections, held for the first time in two decades because of the Lebanese war, offered Hezbollah the chance to acquire political power non-militarily. Also was the party's first opportunity to collaborate with "the ruling government and parliamentarians" and interact with the other sectarian political players namely Syrians allies. Similarly, it was the first opportunity to establish a "direct and widespread contact with communities in cities and villages" a step which entailed a set of new responsibilities for the party, and gave it the occasion to spread its strategy.⁵⁶

The 1992 elections had occurred in very queer circumstances. Although at the time they were widely regarded as "undemocratic", as merely "a Syrian trick", they were greatly advantageous to Hezbollah, the newcomer. Farid el-Khazen, former chairman of the Faculty of Political Science at the American University of Beirut, and former professor, points out six negative features of the elections.

⁵⁶ Qassem, Naim. "Hezbollah: The Story from Within." 2005.
<http://www.naimkassem.org/materials/books/hizbullah/hizbullah.htm> Accessed on May 2008

First, the elections widened the gap between the state and citizens. Moreover, since Lebanon was politically dysfunctional and manipulated by Syria, and since “the chief factor in the 1992 elections depended upon the relationship of local political forces with Syria”, the elections did not reflect people’s true choice or voice.⁵⁷

Secondly, the 1992 elections were boycotted by the opposition mainly because of Syria’s occupation of Lebanon. The opposition having refrained from participating in the elections, the elections resulted in an imbalance representation.⁵⁸

Thirdly, the elections widened the breach between the different sectarian communities in the country, mainly Christians and Muslims. In particular, the elections had disregarded the voice of the Christian opposition which had argued about the timing of the elections and called for a revision of the electoral law, which it considered to be a distortion of the stipulations of the Taif Accord.

Fourthly, “The increased power of parliament, notably of its speaker, gave elections and the new parliament unprecedented importance.”⁵⁹ The Parliament was a “tight ship” of “Syrian color,” which had been hastily created by Syria.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibid. Accessed on May 2008

⁵⁸ Ibid. Accessed on May 2008

⁵⁹ Ibid. Accessed on May 2008

⁶⁰ Harris, William W. *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars, and Global Extensions*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997, p 281.

Fifth, the resulting government severely lacked political legitimacy given that the elections themselves had lacked “true competition” due to the disproportionate voting turnout, a disproportional detrimental to Christian communities.⁶¹ El-Khazen deems that “a large number of deputies entered the 1992 parliament in unopposed electoral contest... through the vacuum caused by the boycott.”⁶²

The sixth and final downside of the elections was that they were held deeming the presence of two regional foreign powers, Syria and Israel, on Lebanon’s soil. The country was severely divided. Moreover, the timing of the elections was a controversial issue that further divided the country. The Christian opposition had demanded the withdrawal of the Syrian army as a prerequisite to holding parliamentary elections.

No matter how unjust and poorly competitive the 1992 elections were, they resulted in unprecedented political success for Hezbollah. The party won eight seats in the Parliament for the Bekaa, Beirut, and South districts, along with four seats gained by “non-Shiite candidates on its list, among whom two Christians, who belonged to the Loyalty to Palestine movement.”⁶³ The twelve seats Hezbollah had won made it the largest political block in the parliament. Some observers interpreted

⁶¹ Qassem, Naim. "Hezbollah: The Story from Within." 2005.
<http://www.naimkassem.org/materials/books/hizbullah/hizbullah.htm> Accessed on May 2008

⁶² Ibid. Accessed on May 2008

⁶³ Trendle, Giles. “Profile: Ali Ammar of Hizballah.” *The Lebanon Report*, Vol. 3, December 1992, p 7.

Hezbollah's winning twelve seats as an encouraging sign that Hezbollah would soon be integrated into the mainstream of Lebanese politics, while others were suspicious that the party might "regard the elections simply as a mean to strengthen its position within a system that it ultimately wishes to overthrow and control."⁶⁴

Hezbollah benefited greatly from four factors in the 1992 elections.

The first factor was the improper timing of the elections, a true "enigma".⁶⁵ These "forced" elections came only one month after the Syrian army deployed its forces in Lebanon, in clear violation of the Taif Accord. They eventually paved the way for the third and fourth advantageous factors for Hezbollah. The timing of the elections infuriated the Christian opposition. As a result, the opposition boycotted the elections, and that enabled Syria to tighten its grip over Lebanon.

The second factor was the 1992 electoral law, a law hastily engineered by Syria. The electoral law was in every sense a distortion of the Taif Accord of 1989. Syria was aware that "some of its most important allies might lose the elections if those allies had to court voters outside of their tribal and sectarian communities," they gerrymandered the size of electoral district by stipulating that "separate elections in Mount Lebanon would be held in each local district, rather

⁶⁴ The Lebanon Report, Vol.2, No.10, October 1992, p 3.

⁶⁵ Trendle, Giles. "Profile: Ali Ammar of Hizballah." The Lebanon Report. Vol. 3, December 1992, p 7.

than the 'mouhafaza' as a whole", in accordance with the Taif accord.⁶⁶ This redistribution of districts aimed to protecting the "position of the Druze leader Walid Jumblatt in the southern part of Mount Lebanon and fragmenting the power of the Christian opposition in the northern parts of Mount Lebanon."⁶⁷

Furthermore, the law altered "the distribution of delegates to favor the representatives of the area of the country in which Syrian forces were most concentrated and had been stationed the longest" by adding another twenty seats to the Parliament, therefore increasing the number of seats of the representatives of Bekaa and North Lebanon by more than 50%.⁶⁸ Such manipulation led Habib C. Malik to assert that the 1992 electoral law "not only distorted the Taif principle of large electoral districts, it also produced a tailored political landscape to guarantee an outcome favorable to Syrian wishes."⁶⁹ Hezbollah would not have been able to gain as many seats in the Parliament had it had to procure votes from non-Shiites and compete with other sectarian groups.

The third factor was the Christian community's large-scale electoral boycott. One source estimated that 87% of the Christians roughly abstained from

⁶⁶ Gambill, Gary C. and Elie Abou Aoun. "Special Report: How Syria Orchestrates Lebanon's elections." Middle East Intelligence Bulletin, Vol.2, No.7, August 2000.

⁶⁷ Salem, Paul. "Skirting Democracy: Lebanon's 1996 Elections and Beyond." Middle East Report, Spring 1997, p 27.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p 27.

⁶⁹ Malik, Habib C. Between Damascus and Jerusalem: Lebanon and Middle East Peace. Washington Institute for Near East policy, 1997, p 27.

showing up at the election polls.⁷⁰ Richard Norton attributes the party's political advance to this boycotting:

One of the most dramatic aspects of the 1992 elections was the entry of Hezbollah into Lebanese parliamentary politics. Out of 27 seats assigned to Shiite Muslims, Hezbollah won 8 in 1992, but there was no doubt that the Hezbollah candidates were assisted by the Christian Boycott. Were they not boycotting, many Christian voters could have been expected to cast a vote against Hezbollah.⁷¹

Hamzeh similarly concludes, "Boycotting the elections had left Hezbollah's candidates and its allies with a distinct edge. Hezbollah would have lost that edge if many people had voted. Hezbollah might still have won, but not in Beirut and Ba'abda and with fewer seats in Baalbeck-Hermil, and some of the southern districts."⁷²

Finally, the fourth factor, which could be concluded from the above-mentioned factors, was Syria's meddling in Lebanese politics.

Although there is no doubt that these four circumstantial factors did contribute in a large measure to Hezbollah's political achievements, Hamzeh argues, "Hezbollah's victories, of course, have not occurred in a vacuum." In other words, he assumes that the party's own efforts and capabilities paved the way to its 1992

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p 28.

⁷¹ Norton, Augustus Richard. "Lebanon's Conundrum: Peace Situation in Lebanon" *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Winter 1999.

⁷² Hamzeh, Nizar. *Third Word Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1997.

victory.⁷³ Moreover, according to Hamzeh's analysis, five crucial internal factors resulted in the party's 1992 success.

First, Hezbollah carefully calculated the "advantages and disadvantages of various alternatives, of which running independently and establishing coalitions." Eventually, Hezbollah's calculations were reflected in its various electoral tactics. The most notable tactic was the "flexible list" in which Hezbollah nominated "a fixed number of party candidates and left vacant seats for other non-partisan candidates." In areas that included non-Shiite communities and in Shiite areas that did not support Hezbollah, the party chose to establish coalitions. For instance, in Baabda, an area with a substantial Druze population, Hezbollah formed an alliance with Walid Joumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party. Another similar example is the South where Syria coerced Hezbollah to run candidates with Amal.⁷⁴

Some analysts interpreted Hezbollah's coalition strategy as Syria's intention "to bridge sectarian, political and ideological differences among its allies so as to prevent opposition candidates from potentially exploiting such differences."⁷⁵ The speculations concerning Hezbollah's coalition, one can convincingly argue that the alliance was a clever tactic to expand the party's political power in a predetermined system based on sectarian quotas. As the Lebanese confessional system allocates a fixed number of seats in the Parliament to each sect, the extent of

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Middle East Intelligence Bulletin. Vol.2, No.7, August 2000.

a party's political strength cannot be directly known from the numbers of seats it has in the parliament.⁷⁶ For example, in Hezbollah's case, it is assumed that no matter how popular Hezbollah becomes, it would never be able to directly occupy more than ten of the one hundred twenty eight parliamentary seats.⁷⁷ For those reasons, such a confessional system necessitates political coalitions. While Hezbollah's electoral alliances do not necessarily demonstrate its commitment to the principles of democracy, one analyst asserts, they definitely reflect the party's experience in pluralist political practices.⁷⁸

Second, the 1992 victory owed much to Hezbollah's long-term social services to the needy Shiite community. Graham Usher argues that most observers viewed the party's 1992 victory as having less to do with Hezbollah's Islamist ideology and more with its prowess to establish a network of social services for the Shiite poor, financed by Iran and conditioned by loyalty to the Party.⁷⁹

A third facilitating factor was Hezbollah's Social involvement in predominantly Shiite areas, such as the Bekaa, Beirut's southern suburbs, and the south.

⁷⁶ Osman, Khalil. "Hizbullah Moves to Assert its Moral Authority in Post-Occupation Lebanese Politics." Crescent International, 1-11 September, 2000.

⁷⁷ Whitaker, Brian. "Hezbollah Seeks Friends." The Guardian, 1 June 2000.

⁷⁸ Schwedler, Jilian. "A Paradox of Democracy? Islamist Participation in Election." Middle East Report, Vol. 28, No.209, Winter 1998, p 25.

⁷⁹ Graham, Usher. "Hizballah, Syria, and the Lebanese Elections." Journal of Palestine Studies, Winter 1997, p 64.

Fourth, the party's so-called "well-oiled electoral machine," organized under the direct supervision of the party's leadership and given the responsibility of every aspect of the election campaigns; in particular, contacting the voters, transporting them to the polls, and helping them maintain security, played a significant role in the elections.⁸⁰ This electoral machine was "composed of 600 party members trained in various campaigning techniques, and thousands of party workers, both male and female."⁸¹

The fifth factor was the significant release of a religious edict. The edict encouraged eligible voters to cast their votes by assuring them a religious legitimacy in the ballot casting. For instance, one sentence of an edict reads, "every man will be asked about his vote on judgment day."⁸²

Between 1992 and 1996, the main tasks of the Parliament were producing large number of legislations, approving the government's reconstruction budget, and planning the settlement of foreign debt. During that time, Hezbollah's deputies and their allies became Lebanon's most determined opposition against Hariri's reconstruction policies.⁸³

⁸⁰ Ibid, p 64.

⁸¹ Third World Quarterly. Vol. 14, No.2, 1993.

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Graham, Usher. "Hizballah, Syria, and the Lebanese Elections." Journal of Palestine Studies, Winter 1997, p 64.

III. The 1996 elections

Hezbollah's stand in the 1996 elections differed greatly from its stand four years ago. In 1992, Hezbollah had run for elections, under Syrian pressure on the joint list with Amal in its stronghold, the South. However, in 1996 the party had become more confident in its political strength, and it was convinced that it could, without establishing electoral alliances, obtain a significant number of seats in the Parliament at the expense of its rival Amal. Hezbollah's confidence at the time had its own grounds; indeed, the party's popularity was at its peak, mainly because Hezbollah had been greatly socially active. After the Grapes of Wrath "anakid el ghadab", Hezbollah repaired the roads that had been damaged, rebuilt the homes that had been destroyed, and even compensated the 2,300 Shiite farmers, to whom the operation was disastrous.⁸⁴

Prior to the elections, Hezbollah reportedly conducted surveys in the South to assess the degree of its political support. Results confirmed the party's previous confident assumptions.⁸⁵ At the mass rally in August 1995, Secretary General Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah defiantly announced the party's "irreversible" decision to run independently in the 1996 elections, in order to authentically mirror its growing popularity in the parliament. Such an announcement, obviously baffle

⁸⁴ "Hezbollah in Politics: Lebanon." *The Economist*, Vol. 340, No. 7982, 7 September 1996, p 38.

⁸⁵ Gambill, Gary C. and Ziad K. Abdelnour. *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 4 No. 2, February 2002.

Damascus. Indeed, the very next day, Hezbollah proclaimed that it would run joint lists with Amal in the South and Bekaa.

In August 1996, attempts to form a Hezbollah-Amal coalition failed. Nabih Berri insisted that Hezbollah should be satisfied with its current number of seats, which infuriated Hezbollah whose leadership was anticipating further political expansion in these elections.⁸⁶ Hezbollah's clash with Amal led to its discord with the pro-governmental and pro-Syrian Berri-Hariri-Jumblatt alliance.

The 1996 elections themselves were no more democratic than the previous ones. One analyst predicted that the Parliament resulting from these elections will most probably have as little regard for institutional sanctity as the 1992 Parliament.⁸⁷ The voter turnout in 1996 was only 44%. The electoral law passed in July of that year was identical to 1992. The "Muhafaza" was used as the electoral district, as it had been in 1992, to that of the North, South, Beirut, and Bekaa. Mount Lebanon, however, had to vote at the level of "Qada'".⁸⁸

It was said by observers, that as in 1992, this particular redistricting in Mount Lebanon was "designed to break up the predominantly Christian electorate and prevent it from ousting several key pro-Syrian ministers, most notably Walid

⁸⁶ "Hezbollah in Politics: Lebanon." *The Economist*, Vol. 340, No. 7982, 7 September 1996, p 39.

⁸⁷ Young, Michael. "The Price of Politics." *The Lebanon Report*, No. 3, Fall 1996, p 22.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p 4.

Jumblat.”⁸⁹ During the 1996 elections, the Christian boycott was partially in place. Not all Christians in the opposition camp wanted to boycott the elections. The two exiled Christian leaders Michel Aoun and Amine Gemayel had advocated the boycott while the Christian politicians in Kornet Chehwan participated in the elections wishing to make a change and fulfilling what the Maronite Archbishops meeting in Bkerki proposed. Bkerki insisted on the Christian participation in the 1996 elections for the purpose of avoiding the 1992 mistakes of not participating and staying out of the Lebanese political system. Nonetheless, fifty two Christian politicians took part of the elections.⁹⁰

For its election campaign, Hezbollah depended most on its image as a resistance in the South. For instance, one of their election posters read the following: “They resist with their blood, resist with your vote.”⁹¹ However, such resistance propaganda did not attract non-Shiite voters. In the mixed electoral districts of Baabda, Hezbollah deputy Ali Ammar was defeated by a majority of combined Maronite and Druze votes. Hezbollah was also defeated in Beirut, where the elections were alleged to have been rigged. Pressured by the pro-government alliance and a series of defeats it had undergone, Hezbollah had no choice but to submit to Syria’s intentions. Hence, at the last minute the party established an alliance with Amal for the elections of the South. Renewing their 1992 alliance, the two parties

⁸⁹ Ibid. p 4.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p 4.

⁹¹ Norton, Augustus Richard. “Hizballah and the Israeli Withdrawal from Southern Lebanon.” Journal of Palestine Studies. Vol.30, No.1, Autumn 2000, p 35.

formed the 'Liberation and Development' list with Amal. Consequently, Hezbollah's collaboration with Amal resulted in their winning of 23 parliament seats for the South. Hezbollah had lost only two seats with respect to the 1992 elections.⁹²

Overall, the 1996 elections were the first political setback for Hezbollah. Hezbollah's relative defeat in the 1996 elections and coerced alliance with Amal significantly affected the party's future electoral conduct.

IV. The 2000 election

Two events that preceded the 2000 elections distinguished them from previous elections. The first even in May of that year was the end of the twenty-two-years of Israeli occupation of South Lebanon. The final withdrawal of Israeli troops and the liberation of the South boosted Hezbollah's fame. Hezbollah's persistent resistance of Israeli occupation had won it great respect not only from the Shiites, but also from few Christians and mainly Sunni and Druze Lebanese sectarian communities. In addition, the party gained a new pool of voters, as the residents of the former Israeli-occupied zone regained the right to vote for the first time in nearly thirty years, in fact since the 1972 elections.⁹³

Numerous events in the aftermath of Israel's occupation highly contributed to increasing Hezbollah's legitimacy. The first event was when the UN

⁹² "Lebanon: Hizbollah Holds its Ground as Polls Continues." Middle East Economic Digest, Vol. 40, No. 38, 20 September 1996. p 15.

⁹³ "Tycoon Wins in Lebanon Vote." The Guardian, 4 September 2000.

Secretary General Kofi Annan visited Beirut; Lebanese and Syrian officials arranged a meeting between him and Nasrallah. The meeting was deemed to be a “de facto recognition that Hezbollah is the main force in the area previously held by Israel, especially in the absence of a strong government.”⁹⁴ Shortly after Anan’s visit and upon an invitation by Lebanese President Emile Lahoud, Nasrallah made an unprecedented official visit to the presidential palace in Baabda. The popularity Hezbollah had gained through its resistance and victory over Israel helped it amass more votes.

The second event was the death of Syrian president Hafez al-Assad in June of 2000. Gary Gambill, writer in the Middle East intelligence bulletin, noted that the late Assad “disliked Islamic fundamentalists and viewed Hezbollah with suspicion because of its Iranian loyalties.”⁹⁵ His son and successor Bashar al-Assad seemed to be more moderate than his late father, and it was widely assumed that Syria would not interfere in Lebanon’s domestic affairs as much as it had in the past. Another analyst pointed out to the changing Syrian discourse by observing that “the best indication to how Syria changed its attitude is its negotiation of the electoral list. This process, which normally intensified during the months preceding the elections, was virtually suspended after al-Assad’s death in June.”⁹⁶

⁹⁴ “Annan Meets a Guerrilla Chief.” [BBC Online](#). 20 June 2000.

⁹⁵ Gambill, Gary C. “Dossier: Hassan Nasrallah.” [Middle East Intelligent Bulletin](#), Vol.2, No.2/3, February-March 2004.

⁹⁶ “Hezbollah, Amal Compete for Supermaxcy”, [Middle Eastern Intelligence Bulletin](#), Vol. 2, No. 6, 1 July 2000.

President Bashar al-Assad also took a conciliatory stance towards Hezbollah. It was reported that the young Syrian leader personally admired the party's military achievements and corruption-free political record.⁹⁷ President Bashar's admiration was reflected in the decision of Damascus to give the two parties, Hezbollah and Amal, equal representation in Lebanon's next Parliament by selecting their candidate lists. Moreover, Hezbollah was allowed to increase the number of seats of its parliamentary block from nine to twelve.⁹⁸ Syria, having shifted its policy to benefit Hezbollah, palpably facilitated the party's further political expansion.

In the 2000 elections, several coincidences were exceedingly on Hezbollah's side. Nevertheless, Hezbollah chose to run a joint campaign with Amal as it had done in the preceding two elections. A possible explanation for such a coalition lies here below:

Hezbollah did not want to destabilize its relationship with Amal. For example, as quoted by Al-Ahram Weekly, Hezbollah deputy Abdallah Kasir stated, "We do not believe that our strength derives from the number of seats we win. We know we can get more than twenty seats, but our goal is not to eliminate other groups."⁹⁹ In his statement, "other groups" obviously meant rival Amal.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Khodor, Zeina. "Lebanese Politics 'Revive' at Fever Pitch" Al-Ahram Weekly, Issue No.496, 24-30 August 2000.

As Hezbollah's triumph in the South received wide acclaim all over the region and its leader Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah was welcomed cordially by governmental officials in Syria, the competition between the two parties, Hezbollah and Amal, for the residents' support in the newly liberated area and for Syria's patronage severely intensified. It is assumed that Amal supporters and leader Berri were very envious of Hezbollah's stunning military and political success. According to one observation, "as Hezbollah militants staged ostentatious victory parades throughout the area, Amal leader Berri desperately sought to deny Hezbollah exclusive credit for the 'liberation' of South Lebanon. In an attempt to steal the spotlight, Berri convened a special session of the Lebanese Parliament in the southern Lebanese town of Bint Jbeil less than a week after the Israeli withdrawal."¹⁰⁰ The increasingly mounting conflicts of interests between the two rival parties manifested itself in a series of bloody clashes between their supporters in the South. For example, on July 17, 2000 the BBC reported, a violent clash, which for the first time resulted in a death toll on the side of Hezbollah.¹⁰¹

It is in such a volatile situation that Hezbollah discreetly maintained its coalition with Amal. Nasrallah himself, having seemingly perceived this arising political strain with Amal, repeatedly expressed his unwillingness to exploit his privileged status. For instance, one week after the liberation, he proclaimed that the

¹⁰⁰ "Hezbollah, Amal Compete for Supermacy", *Middle Eastern Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 6, 1 July 2000.

¹⁰¹ "Rival Groups Clash in Southern Lebanon." *BBC Online*, 16 June 2000..

party would not use its victory for electoral gain.¹⁰² On another occasion, at a rally near Khiyam, on August 19, he commented on the coalition, “The Hezbollah-Amal alliance has not been imposed by anyone, whether local nor regional forces. This alliance has been established because of our feeling of responsibility toward the victory we achieved.”¹⁰³

The second reason for Hezbollah’s coalition is its cautiousness with respect. The party had learned not to trust Syria blindly after the 1996 elections. On one hand, some observers assumed that the alliance between the two parties had as usual been urged by Syria to protect the standing of Amal’s leader, all the more because Hezbollah would have won the majority of votes without Amal. On the other hand, the 12 seats assigned for the party were far less than its political strength deserved.¹⁰⁴

The 2000 elections were the scene of fierce political infighting especially among the pro-Syrian candidates themselves. The incumbent Lebanese regime led by President Lahoud and Prime Minister Hoss, opposed the Hariri camp, which included Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, and a number of leading Christians from the opposition. Some observers deemed that this inner division had deprived

¹⁰² Yahiya, Ranwa. “A Future Premier.” Al-Ahram Weekly, No. 498, 7-13 July 2000.

¹⁰³ “Hizbollah Moves to Assert its Moral Authority in Post-Occupation Lebanese Politics.” Crescent International, 1-15 September 2000.

¹⁰⁴ Yahiya, Ranwa. “A Future Premier.” Al-Ahram Weekly, No. 498, 7-13 July 2000.

these elections from competition.¹⁰⁵ One of the central issues of the 2000 elections was Lebanon's severe economic situation. Lebanon's public debt had reached the sum of \$23 billion by 2000. Consequently, the elections reflected the growing discontent with economic situation.¹⁰⁶ President Lahoud and the Hoss government blamed Hariri's extravagant post-war reconstruction plan for the debt. In return, the Hariri camp criticized the government's interference in the electoral results. For example, Jumblatt stated, "The President and part of his entourage are using all means, from security agencies to the military to fight us. Their aim is to disrupt what remains of civil society."

The Hezbollah-Amal alliance achieved a sweeping success in the South and the Bekaa. In the South, the result was a complete victory, with all 23 seats won. Although Hezbollah was part of an Amal-led joint list, its own popularity was evident. In the formerly occupied South, Hezbollah candidates secured more votes than Amal candidates, and "even voters in the Christian town of Marjayun and the nearby villages of Dibil, Ayn Ibil, and Rmeish, where Israel's proxy militia, the South Lebanon Army, had maintained a solid presence during the occupation, voted overwhelmingly for Hezbollah candidates."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Gambill, Gary C. and Daniel Nassif. "Lebanon's Parliamentary Elections: Manufacturing Dissent." Middle East Intelligence Bulletin, Vol.2, No.8, 5 September 2000

¹⁰⁶ "Opposition candidates Win Elections." APS Diplomat Recorder, 9 September 2000.

¹⁰⁷ Osman, Khalil. "Hizbullah-Amal Successes Better News for Lebanon than Possible Return of Hariri." Crescent International, 16-30 September 2000.

The 2000 elections significantly showed that Hezbollah was becoming a national political player, with the help of the Syrians. Indeed, Hezbollah was not a political force that behaved instinctively on its rapacious desire for power, as some doubtful Christian politicians feared, or as Hezbollah was portrayed by some of the Western media. Rather it was a political party which knew how to restrain itself and wait for the right moment to apply its strategies, which were often based on estimations of the balance of power and interests of other contenders. The 2000 elections were in a sense the barometer of Hezbollah's pragmatism.

V. Conclusion

In summary, Hezbollah's participation in parliamentary elections can be interpreted as a positive indication of the party's growing political maturity and a qualitative leap forward in the sense that political objectives took precedence over all others, whether military and security or religious and revolutionary ones.¹⁰⁸ More significantly, this reoriented strategy is "an evolutionary rather than revolutionary model, in which the ballot box is used as an instrument for achieving social, economic, and political changes."¹⁰⁹ Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary General, Naim Qassim's words, eloquently described Hezbollah's current political situation: "we are not a state within a state, and we are not a security force. We are an independent political party playing its role. We try to increase our numbers and preach our

¹⁰⁸ Kfoury, Assaf. Hezbollah and the Lebanese State. In *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report*. Eds, Joel Beinin and Joe Stork. Berkley: University of California Press, 1994, p 138.

¹⁰⁹ Hamzeh, A. Nizar. The future of Islamic Movements in Lebanon, in *Islamic Fundamentalism: Myths and Realities*. Eds, Ahmad Moussali. Reading UK: Ithaca Press, 1998. p 252.

ideology. In the end, the choice is the people's."¹¹⁰ But Hezbollah, seemed to slowly head to controlling the country by a smart tactic: own weapons, enter the Parliament, go into the government, and finally, wait for the right moment to overthrow the government.

¹¹⁰ Schneider, Howard. "The Changing Face of a Militant Movement." The Washington Post, 5 April 2000.

CHAPTER V

HEZBOLLAH IN SOCIETY

I. Introduction

Hezbollah's social activism within the Shiite community, "perhaps the most impressive aspect of the changes that Hezbollah has undergone," illustrates another important characteristic that the party has sought to develop since the end of the Lebanese war.¹¹¹

Firstly, Hezbollah's social activism demonstrated the party's considerable degree of commitment to the Shiite society. Acclaimed as having the most organized and effective social welfare program in Lebanon, Hezbollah, has through its distinguished social activities surpassed the meager governmental services. Indeed, Hezbollah's services have proved to be a more dependable alternative to the Government's social welfare system, "Hezbollah has built a shadow social system."¹¹² Although Hezbollah's social services were not exclusive to the Lebanese Shiite community, they were mainly designed to improve it; and

¹¹¹ "Redrawing the Islamic Map, Lebanon: How Hezbollah has changed." *APS Diplomat*, Vol. 40, i3, 11 September 2000.

¹¹² "Periscope: The Rise of Nasrallah", *Newsweek*, 9 February 2004, p 4.

thus, the Lebanese Shiites, were the primary beneficiaries of the party's services. However, and by chiefly aiding only the Shiite community, Hezbollah was metamorphosing into a "sectarian" political party, therefore threatening its own development into a Lebanese secular party.

Secondly, Hezbollah's sustained social involvement demonstrates its religious integrity. As a matter of fact, Hezbollah considers that its involvement in the community is religiously sanctioned, as Islamic obligation stipulates that "Muslims are responsible to diminish social injustice and economic inequalities in everyday life."¹¹³ Because of this Islamic duty, according to Harik, "the collection and disbursement of financial donations to social services is extremely important to maintain the overall image of Hezbollah as a credible Islamic group."¹¹⁴ Interestingly, the party's social achievements indicated that the party's religious role has changed from forcing the Islamic religion onto politics to trying to smoothly integrate the two. Apparently, the party seemed to have forgotten about the political aspect of Islam, forcing Islam on politics as party leaders talked less about establishing an Islamic state.

Thirdly, and finally, Hezbollah's social services reflected the party leaders' keen realization that the main concern for the party's constituency is "not so much its grand pan-Islamic design such as the liberation of Jerusalem," rather more

¹¹³ Shadid, Anthony. Legacy of the Prophet: Despots, Democrats, and the New Politics of Islam. Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 2002, p 113.

¹¹⁴ Blanford, Nicholas. "Lebanon's A-Team Terrorist Valued for Social Services." Christian Science Monitor, 19 May 2003.

“economic viability.”¹¹⁵ For most of the party’s supporters, religion is associated with the community’s social identity and perceived to be the fundamental source of motivation for the betterment of the Shiite society. Nonetheless, this belief is exclusive to the party’s supporters, not members. To the members, religion and the liberation of Jerusalem are the bases of their daily life. Any child attending a Hezbollah schools is taught, from the age three, about Jerusalem, the Mahdi, and the right to acquire weapons.

Criticizing Hezbollah, many Western analysts suspected that Hezbollah’s primary motive behind its social services is solely to recruit party members and increase its popularity. R. Scott Appleby, for instance, asserted that “fundamentalist welfare programs provide a way to recruit members, build sympathy in the larger community, and fight secular regimes.”¹¹⁶ Increased recruitment and political support is a natural consequence of the party’s “penetration into the lower layers of the Shiite community through a vast social welfare system.”¹¹⁷

As a reminder, Hezbollah is not the only organization that offers social services to the needy. It actually has innumerable competitors. Sunni Islamic organizations and individual Ulamas are also as active in social works. Examples of

¹¹⁵ Chartouni-Dubarry, May. Hezbollah: from Militia to Political Party, in Lebanon on Hold. Rosemary Hollis and Nadim Shehadi. London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996, p 61. and “Declawing the Party of God.” World Policy Journal, p 31.

¹¹⁶ Appleby, R. Scott. “Religious Fundamentalisms and Global Conflict.” Foreign Policy Association-Headline Series, 1994.

¹¹⁷ Hoveyda, Fereydoon. The Broken Crescent: The Threat of Militant Islamic Fundamentalism. Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1998.

such Islamic Charity organizations in Lebanon are: Dar al-Zahra for Orphans in Tripoli, Hadeer in Beirut, the Islamic Charity Association Kafrhouna in Kafr Hunah, the Islamic Welfare Association in Saida, Jamaat Abdur Rahman in Beirut, and Markaz-al-Daawa al-Islamiah in Beirut.

One of the most notable competitors to the party's social program is Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, a major supplier of social services to the Shiite community. Fadlallah has built orphanages in the Bekaa, Hirmel, the South and Beirut; his orphanages sustain two thousand orphans. He has also built Islamic cultural centers and vocational schools and schools for the handicapped in the South, Hirmel, Riyaaq, the Bekaa, and Beirut.¹¹⁸ Fadlallah himself had once revealed that his social service office spends the large sum of eight to ten billion Lebanese pounds annually.¹¹⁹ Because such competition for providing services in the Shiite community exists, then Hezbollah's popularity is not attributed to a vacuum in social services, but rather to the party's ability of perceiving local needs and applying effective programs that deal with such needs.

In fact, Hezbollah's social activism evolved along with its military resistance against Israel. By creating a social welfare infrastructure that is independent of the Lebanese government, Hezbollah aimed at reducing the impact of

¹¹⁸ Khalidi, Ahmad S. "Islamic Unity and Political Change." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Autumn 1995, p 64.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p 64.

Israeli military campaigns on the population in the South. Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary General, Naim Qassem elaborates on this point in his book:

Such social work which has evolved alongside resistance activity served to relieve the resistance of a considerable burden by assisting the populace in their endurance of Israeli aggression and the remnants of occupation. It also fostered a humane and social environment of joint responsibility, thus shielding the resistance from social catastrophes, those from which the government simply alienated itself.¹²⁰

Apart from the party's capabilities to establish a thorough grassroots system, another factor contributed to Hezbollah's successful social achievement; the chronic lack of governmental services. Were it not for state negligence, maldistribution of state funds, and corruption, without which resources could have been properly allocated to alleviate the economically challenged population of the South, Hezbollah's social works would not have expanded to this extent and gained such a wide popular appreciation.

Hilal Khashan's 1998 research on the social services provided by Lebanon's Islamic fundamentalist groups revealed to what extent large proportions of locals are actually dependent on non-governmental social services to survive. The Lebanese Shiites, who claim to be the most deprived Lebanese sectarian community, are highly resentful of scant state services. For example, 49.8% of the Shiites consider that governmental services are poor, and surprisingly, Khashan discovered

¹²⁰ Qassem, Naim. "Hezbollah: The Story from Within." 2005.
<http://www.naimkassem.org/materials/books/hizbullah/hizbullah.htm>. Accessed on May 2008

that “90% of Shiite respondents are grateful to the aid they receive from Hezbollah.”¹²¹ He argues:

*Corruption, resource misallocation, and an inadequate technological capacity meant that most public demands would not be fulfilled. Frustrated expectations created an optimal environment for the emergence of opposition groups. Islamist groups equipped themselves with religious tenets, which they raised as slogans for socio-political action, thus succeeding in building a base of wide public support. Legitimacy was treated as a function of ideological affinity and the provision of public services.*¹²²

Establishing such a wide network of social services would not have been possible for Hezbollah without Iran’s financial assistance. Some of the party-affiliated organizations like the Martyr’s Foundation and Relief Committee are still subject to direct Iranian control. At present, the party’s bankroll is supplied either by donations of wealthy Shiite émigrés in the Gulf and West Africa, or by religious donations called “al-khums”, which oblige Shiites to contribute one-fifth of their profits to religious institutions.¹²³

The manner in which Hezbollah’s social welfare mechanism actually operates, and how it has come to cover such a wide range of local needs, and in turn, such an efficient provision of services has had an impact on the popular Shiite masses.

¹²¹ Khashan, Hilal. The Development Program of Islamic Fundamentalist Groups in Lebanon as a Source of Popular Legitimation. Islamic Fundamentalism, 1998. p 235-236.

¹²² Ibid., p 221.

¹²³ Paraipan, Manuela. “Outside View: The View from Hezbollah.” United Press International, 6 April 2005.

II. Jihad al-Bina' (the Holy Reconstruction Organ)¹²⁴

Hezbollah's social services are diverse, they include: medical care, education, sanitation, construction, agriculture, and emergency relief. The party's social initiative began in 1984, merely two years after the party was created. That year, in order to minimize the damage caused by Israeli attacks and to protect residents in the South, a majority of Shiites, the party set up "Jihad al-Bina'." It was created on the same lines as Iran's "Jihad Sazindagi."¹²⁵ Ibrahim A. Ismail, General Manager of the organization, recalls the initial impetus of the organization: "We had to start rebuilding what Israel destroyed so that people would say."¹²⁶ Jihad al-Bina's main function was "to reconstruct and rehabilitate war-torn buildings, doing everything from repairing mosques to fixing broken toilets in public schools."¹²⁷ Jihad al-Bina's first task was, as Deputy Secretary General Naim Qassem recalls was "to restore buildings damaged by the Bir al-Abed bombing of 1985."¹²⁸ Jihad al-

¹²⁴ <http://www.jihadbinaa.org> Accessed on May 2008

¹²⁵ Bangash, Zafar. "Leadership, Commitment and Courage: the Basis of Hizbullah's Victories over Zionists." *Crescent International*, 1-15 August 2000.

¹²⁶ Fecci, JoMarie. "As Hezbollah Hastens Israeli Withdrawals it Integrates Itself into South Lebanon's Economic Life", *Washington Report on Middle East*, December 1999.

¹²⁷ Goodman, Julie. "Field Hospital Mushrooms into Thriving Medical Network." International Reporting Project of John Hopkins University, *School of Advanced International Studies*, Fall 2004.

¹²⁸ Qassem, Naim. "Hezbollah: The Story from Within." 2005.
<<http://www.naimkassem.org/materials/books/hizbullah/hizbullah.htm>> Accessed on May 2008.

Bina' aimed not only at rebuilding but also at "providing basic services for the people in an area which was neglected by the government at that time."¹²⁹

Though Jihad al-Bina' is a product of armed resistance, the organization continues to play a significant role among the locals, even after the end of Israeli occupation. According to Nizar Hamzeh, this organ is currently under the direct supervision of the politburo, and is composed of eight committees. These are, respectively; the Technical Administrative Committee, which oversees the work of the other seven committees, the Agricultural Committee, the Power Resource Committee, the Water Resource Committee, the Islamic Health Committee, the Financial Aid Committee, the Reconstruction Committee, and the Environmental Committee.¹³⁰ As their names clearly indicate, each committee has its own specialization. The organization is officially registered in the Lebanese Ministry of Interior and in the list of Non-Governmental Organizations working with the UNDP.¹³¹

There are many examples of Jihad al-Bina's past activities. For instance, during General Aoun's administration that is between 1988 and 1991, water and electricity services in the Beirut suburbs were almost completely disrupted due to military conflicts. To deal with the problem, Jihad al-Bina' built 4,000-liter water

¹²⁹ Ibid. Accessed on May 2008.

¹³⁰ Hamzeh, Nizar. *Third World Quarterly*. Vol. 14, No. 2, 1993. <http://ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/pspa/hamzeh2.html> Accessed on May 2008

¹³¹ *Mediterranean Politics*. Vol.3, No.1, summer 1998. <<http://www.undp.org>> Accessed on May 2008

reservoirs in each district of Beirut's southern suburbs and replenished each of them five times a day.¹³² It also disposed of the accumulation of waste, which amounted to sixty-five tons per day. And up to this day, Jihad al-Bina' continues to provide drinking water free of charge. Another example dates back to the severe snowstorm of March 1992. To deal with the destruction caused by the storm, Jihad al-Bina' organized teams of relief workers to open roads and distribute food and blankets to isolated villages.¹³³

After Israel's withdrawal in 2000, Jihad al-Bina' took the initiative of working energetically to rebuild the formerly occupied area. For example, only one week after the liberation, Hezbollah volunteers poured into Bint Jbeil to construct a water pump that would provide drinking water to the residents since "a pipeline that had been bringing drinking water from Israel has been closed."¹³⁴ Throughout the South, while Hezbollah's trucks removed remaining debris from the streets and widened the narrow roads, Hezbollah's engineers surveyed the extent of damage in the buildings to estimate the material demands of reconstruction.¹³⁵ Aside from the aforementioned services that Jihad al-Bina' provides, the organization also supports the educational sector by offering subsidies, scholarships, and grants through its Financial Aid Committee.

¹³² Cobban, Helena. "Hizbullah's New Face: in Search of a Muslim Democracy." *Boston Review*, April-May 2005.

¹³³ Trendle, Giles. "The Grassroots of Success." *The Middle East*, February 1993, p 12.

¹³⁴ Sachs, Susan. "Helping Hand of Hezbollah Emerging in South Lebanon." *The New York Times*, 30 May 2000.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

Agriculture is another field where Jihad al-Bina' has acquired an excellent reputation. It extended its services to Hezbollah's farmers across the country, providing them with the necessary fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds at a cost lower than market price.¹³⁶ It also conducted an "observation of annual agriculture cycles, distribution of saplings, field visits, provision of agricultural credit, and distribution of tractors."¹³⁷ Hezbollah's veterinarians "yearly vaccinate the cows, goats, and sheep and keep tabs on fish to reduce environmental harm and help meet the rising domestic demand for healthy food."¹³⁸

Moreover, the organization offers, in its agricultural centers in western Bekaa, many services such as soil-testing labs, research labs for area survey, and even "nurseries for experimenting new plant varieties and growing seedlings."¹³⁹ According to Ismail, a General Manager at Jihad al-Bina', the agricultural sector is "the most important issue" for the organization. "Thirty-five percent of the Lebanese population works in agriculture, and since the government has never really focused on agriculture, we thought it was an important sector to work in."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Hamzeh, Nizar. *Third World Quarterly*. Vol. 14, No. 2, 1993. <<http://ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/pspa/hamzeh2.html>>. Accessed on May 2008

¹³⁷ Qassem, Naim. "Hezbollah: The Story from Within." 2005. <http://www.naimkassem.org/materials/books/hizbullah/hizbullah.htm> Accessed on May 2008

¹³⁸ Goodman, Julie. "Field Hospital Mushrooms into Thriving Medical Network." International Reporting Project of John Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies. Fall 2004.

¹³⁹ Fecci, JoMarie. "As Hezbollah Hastens Israeli Withdrawals it Integrates Itself into South Lebanon's Economic Life", Washington Report on Middle East, December 1999.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

III. The Islamic Health Committee¹⁴¹

Among the other committees which are generally more concerned with material aid or recovery, the Islamic Health Committee is distinctive for its specialization in health. It was established in 1984 “by a small group of doctors, nurses, and paramedics who banded together to establish a field hospital for the wounded, as Beirut’s suburbs were besieged by militias.”¹⁴² Today the Islamic Health Committee is estimated to have five hospitals, sixty-two health clinics, three counseling centers, two mobile clinics, one-thousand-three-hundred volunteers, six-hundred-fifty staff members and seven-hundred-fifty doctors, and provides services to around six-hundred-thousand people per year.¹⁴³ It collaborates with the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the WHO (World Health Organization) and UNICEF.¹⁴⁴ In addition to providing free medical care, it conducts regular medical checkups in schools, supporting medical programs like the “Health Screening Program in Public Schools in Lebanon.” During the 2001-2002 school years, the organization screened eighty-eight schools and about fifteen-thousand students.¹⁴⁵ It also organized lectures on smoking and campaigns on

¹⁴¹ <http://www.hayaa.org/english/material/who/ilakat/ilakat.htm> Accessed on May 2008

¹⁴² Fecci, JoMarie. “As Hezbollah Hastens Israeli Withdrawals it Integrates Itself into South Lebanon’s Economic Life”, Washington Report on Middle East, December 1999.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ <http://www.hayaa.org/english/material/who/ilakat/ilakat.htm> Accessed on May 2008

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. Accessed on May 2008

disease-prevention awareness. In 2001-2002, it gave one-hundred-seventy-two lectures in all throughout Lebanon.¹⁴⁶

When Israel withdrew from the South, in 2000, the Committee quickly rushed to the liberated area to offer medical care with the help of volunteer doctors and nurses in mobile clinics. It also took over hospitals abandoned by pro-Israeli doctors and began providing hospital services for the residents. One such hospital is Saleh Ghandour Hospital in Bint Jbeil, which currently treats 250 people per day, regardless of their religion, charging only 25% of the standard fees.¹⁴⁷ In 2008, the total number of the organization's employees in the formerly occupied zone reached one-hundred-eighty doctors, one-hundred-forty nurses, and one-hundred-ninety civil defense staff members.¹⁴⁸

The Committee's activities are not necessarily confined to health services. For example, when Lebanon was hit by a harsh snowstorm in February 2004, the Committee undertook a swift emergency relief operation to open blocked roads and supply electricity to remote parts of the Bekaa. During the emergency operation, the Committee collaborated with the Lebanese Internal Security Forces, the local municipality, and the Red Cross.¹⁴⁹ On another occasion, In March 2004,

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. Accessed on May 2008.

¹⁴⁷ Blanford, Nicholas. "Lebanon's A-Team Terrorist Valued for Social Services." Christian Science Monitor, 19 May 2003.

¹⁴⁸ <http://www.hayaa.org/english/material/nashatat/kashef/kashef.htm>. Accessed on May 2008.

¹⁴⁹ Morshed al-Ali and Nicholas Tohmeh. "Storms and High Winds Batter the Country." The Daily Star, 23 February 2004.

the local newspapers reported how when the remains of Palestinian fighters dating back to the 1982 Israeli attacks were discovered in a mass grave by local residents, members of the Islamic Health Committee rushed to the site and, with the help of the residents, searched for skeletons using shovels and pickaxes.¹⁵⁰ Exhumed remains were taken to Hezbollah's hospital in Nabatieh. The Committee also showed an active initiative in emergency services. When a number of residents of the southern city of Sidon suffered from a wave of poisoning, the Committee promptly sent its vehicles to the municipal medical center where patients were gathered, "to transfer patients to area hospitals in an apparent effort to alleviate the crowding, as well as to distribute additional serum bags."¹⁵¹

IV. The Martyr's Foundation

The Martyr's Foundation was set up exclusively to help the families of fallen resistance fighters and war prisoners. It is a Lebanese branch of the Iranian Martyr's Foundation, which is directly controlled by Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, and "one of many charitable groups established after the Iranian revolution to manage assets seized from the family and supporters of the deposed shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi."¹⁵² According to Qassem, it offers housing, education, clothing, and health services to children of party martyrs, and even helps

¹⁵⁰ Wahbe, Samer. "Grave of Palestinian Fighters Discovered." The Daily Star, 15 March 2004.

¹⁵¹ Zaatari, Mohammad. "Sidon Hit by Wave of Poison Cases." The Daily Star, 18 May 2004.

¹⁵² The Washington Post, 5 April 2000.

them find jobs.¹⁵³ One estimate is that the widows of martyrs are supported by a financial aid worth \$ 1,200 per month.¹⁵⁴ The foundation is currently taking care of one-thousand-two-hundred-eighty-four families of martyrs of the resistance, including six-hundred-eighty-four spouses, one-thousand-two-hundred-fifteen children and one-thousand-five-hundred-ninety-six parents.¹⁵⁵ Besides its many services, the Martyr's Foundation has also established the Prophet's Greatest Hospital as well as the al-Shahed Educational Forum.

In addition to the above-mentioned organizations, numerous social organizations are independent of yet have strong ties to the party. They are, for example: Imam Khomeini's Relief Committee, the Foundation of the Oppressed, the Institution for the Wounded, the Islamic Philanthropic Committee, which provides aid to "the orphans, the destitute, the handicapped, and the displaced, as well as to elderly persons."¹⁵⁶ In parallel to those organizations outside Hezbollah's structure, the Department of Social Affairs within the executive administration of the party is also engaged in active social services and provision of funds.

¹⁵³ Qassem, Naim. "Hezbollah: The Story from Within." 2005.
<<http://www.naimkassem.org/materials/books/hizbullah/hizbullah.htm>>Accessed on May 2008.

¹⁵⁴ Smiles, Sarah. "Hizbullah Widows Enjoy Honor, Comforts in Lebanon." *Women's News*, 14 September 2003.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Qassem, Naim. "Hezbollah: The Story from Within." 2005.
<<http://www.naimkassem.org/materials/books/hizbullah/hizbullah.htm>>Accessed on May 2008.

Moreover, Hezbollah sponsors several NGOs, one of which is the Emdad Committee for Islamic Charity; the committee was established in 1987, and it offers its services mainly in the South.¹⁵⁷ The organization's slogan, "Support the destitute and the needy," it offers financial support to families with no breadwinner, with social problems such as divorce, handicap, or severe poverty, and families living in remote or neglected areas.¹⁵⁸ The committee offers services in health care, emergency, education, and recreation. It also provides for orphans, donates sums to the needy, and sponsors income-generating programs.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, Hezbollah is now deeply rooted in its constituency through social engagement. As observed above, Hezbollah's social services are impressive in terms of both quality and extent. The party's network of social organizations, independent organizations, and party-sponsored NGOs, all effectively complement each other in order to maximize their service coverage as broadly as possible. Significantly, the party's social involvement has produced interdependent relations between the party and its constituencies. On one hand, for Hezbollah, its social services are a crucial source of its legitimacy and viability in terms of its religious cause. On the other hand, for the constituency, the party's services have now become a crucial part of its everyday life, and many rely on them for survival. However, it is highly unlikely that Hezbollah's social activism is spurred only by

¹⁵⁷<http://www.almashriq.org> Accessed on May 2008.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, Accessed on May 2008.

temporary plans to expand its recruitment; rather, it has become deeply embedded in the party's ideology. As the military aspect of the party is gradually diminishing, the party's religiously inspired social activism is becoming an important feature of Hezbollah's identity.

CHAPTER VI

HEZBOLLAH AFTER 9/11

I. Introduction:

Many events drove Hezbollah to the foreground of the international scene. On September 11, 2001, two passenger planes crashed into New York's World Trade Center towers and another two into the Pentagon. It was the first time in history after the attack of Pearl Harbor that the United States territory was directly assaulted. The United States blamed Islamist Fundamentalists namely, Al-Qaeda. A year before, in May 2000, and after approximately twenty years of occupation, Hezbollah's resistance had been able to drive Israel military forces out of South Lebanon. Three years later, in February 2005, Beirut, the Lebanese capital, witnessed the massive explosion that resulted in the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri. All the dates listed above are somehow related to terrorism. And all of the events mentioned made Hezbollah a popular Lebanese party among the Shiites, who, nevertheless, are engaged today in political disputes regarding the future of Hezbollah's military activities.

Foreign policy is defined in general as "the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international

relations.”¹⁵⁹ Under the phrase “independent actor,” the author encompasses international organizations such as the United Nations and regional organizations such as the European Union. Terrorist organizations are, more precisely, known as non-state actors. Through foreign policy “the actor state advances its main objectives and shapes the external world.”¹⁶⁰ “The politics of foreign policy is perpetually changing”, “Changes in the whole are thus real and of great significance for the parts.”¹⁶¹ The study of the 9/11 events and the consequent new foreign policy of the Bush administration shows the significant importance, the significant effect of a particular change (the 9/11 events) on the whole international community.

II. Terrorism:

Hezbollah is perceived by the West, and especially by the US, as a terrorist organization. From the United States’ perspective, the party should suspend its military activities in order to become a purely political party. To attain its objective, the United States is calling for the disarmament of Hezbollah, supported by the United Nations Security Council resolution 1559, which considers Hezbollah a militia that needs to be urgently disarmed. There is no one definition of terrorism agreed upon by the whole of the international community, for terrorism has become an abstract and moral concept relating to culture. Indeed, terrorism has become a cultural aspect, whereby an act may be viewed as terrorist by one culture, but not so

¹⁵⁹ Hill, Christopher. The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy. US Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p.3.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p 4.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p 11.

by another. The general definition of terrorism states that terrorism is *“the threat or use of politically motivated violence which deliberately targets innocent people so as to affect the behaviour of groups, individuals, or governments.”*¹⁶² Nonetheless this definition has been rejected by many western researchers because they considered it too broad and as such, incorporating too many acts. And so, to define terrorism, the west usually refers to the United States State Department explanation which states that *“terrorism is premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience,”*¹⁶³ noting that non-combatants include both civilian and military personnel who are unarmed or off-duty at the time.¹⁶⁴ What these two definitions have in common is that they both agree that terrorism is politically cultivated, or motivated. The United States definition claims that terrorism is not practiced by states, but actually terrorism can be perpetrated by non-state actors as well as by state actors. State Terrorism is usually considered to be terrorism committed by a state or state agency against defenseless victims. States have been and continue to be involved from time to time in a wide variety of violent acts against their own citizens and those of others.¹⁶⁵ Shay Shaul Shay, in his book *The*

¹⁶² Amal Saad-Ghorayeb “Methodology and Political Analysis”, AUB course material presented in Fall 2004.

¹⁶³ Whitaker, Brian. “Hezbollah Seeks Friends.” *The Guardian*, 1 June 2000, p 1.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p 1.

¹⁶⁵ Simonsem, Clifford E. and Jeremy R Spindlove. *Terrorism Today, the Past, the Player, the Future*. Pentice-Hall, 2000, p 35.

Axis of Evil deals thoroughly with State Terrorism, distinguishing between three categories of State Terrorism.

The first category is that of states supporting terrorism, this category includes countries that support terrorist organizations via financial, ideological, military, and operational aid.¹⁶⁶

The second is that of states operating terrorism, states that initiate and implement terror activity via sponsored organizations while avoiding direct involvement of governmental agencies in the action.¹⁶⁷

The third category is that of states perpetrating terrorism, states that perpetrate terror worldwide through the state's security agencies (security and intelligence mechanisms).¹⁶⁸ According to Louise Richardson in *The Future of Terrorism*, there are currently seven state-sponsors of terrorism on the United States list. They are: Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria. These terrorist states are linked in one way or another "for a variety of reasons, sometimes a shared ideology, sometimes a shared enemy or sometimes, simply, shared training facilities."¹⁶⁹ As states perpetrate terrorist acts, non-state actors can be engaged as well in terrorism.

¹⁶⁶ Shaul, Shay. *The Axis of Evil*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2005. p 8.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p 8.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p 8.

¹⁶⁹ Hagan, John. and Max Taylor. *The Future of Terrorism*. London: Franc Cass publishers, 2000, p 216.

Here, the engagement may be either direct or indirect (by helping other terrorist organizations).

The United States considers Hezbollah as a non-state actor engaged in terrorist actions directed against Israeli citizens and soldiers, and against western presence in reference to the 1983 US marine bombing. In the same context, Iran is considered by the United States to be a state sponsoring terrorism whereby it is Hezbollah's sponsor whether ideologically, financially and militarily. Iran too is accused of sponsoring terrorist organizations other than Hezbollah. Perpetrators of international terrorism, or more accurately terrorist organizations (non-state actors), are divided into four categories.

The first category is that of the "nationalist terrorists. These are groups seeking political self determination."¹⁷⁰ They are engaged in a struggle to liberate their territory. Fateh in Palestine is one example from this category. The second category is that of the "ideological terrorists. These groups profess their inclination to change the whole nature of the existing political, social, and economic system."¹⁷¹ They seek a change in the current world order." The third category is that of the "religious fanatics". Certain religions groups employ international terrorism to undermine and ultimately overthrow a prevailing religious order, which they regard

¹⁷⁰ Freedman, Lawrence, Christopher Hill, Adam Roberts, Vincent R.J, Paul Wilkinson, and Philip Windsor. Terrorism and the International Order. Rout ledge and Kagan Paul, 1986, p 39.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. p 39.

as corrupt and evil.”¹⁷² Al-Qaeda is a good example for this category. The fourth category is that of “single-issue fanatics. These groups are obsessed with the desire to change a specific policy or practice within the target society.”¹⁷³

At the level of the international scene, Hezbollah’s resistance activities are considered by the West as terrorist activities whereas, at the level of the Lebanese scene, Hezbollah is considered to have earned its legitimacy from the Lebanese government as national resistance party.

Hezbollah’s stand as a party is complex. Moreover, Hezbollah is part of a complex and perplex Lebanese society whose fate has been fluctuating since the February 14th 2005 assassination of Premier Hariri. Because Hezbollah has external affiliations, namely with Syria and Iran, it has been subject to much criticism and opposition from other Lebanese. As a result, Hezbollah faced external and internal pressures.

The year 2000 marked the end of approximately twenty years of Israeli occupation. The sudden Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon brought the Shiite complex or identity crisis to the surface again; Hezbollah’s military activity no longer had any legitimacy according to some Lebanese politicians. “On May 24,

¹⁷² Ibid. p 39.

¹⁷³ Ibid. p 39.

2000, Israeli forces completed their withdrawal from south Lebanon, ending what Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Barak called Israel's own 'Lebanese Tragedy.'¹⁷⁴

Although the Israelis had withdrawn from Lebanon, Lebanon still had not regained its independence as a state. Armed Palestinians were still present on the Lebanese soil and because Hezbollah still hadn't removed its military bases to be replaced by the Lebanese army. Over the years Hezbollah's existence, or more accurately, Hezbollah's military existence has been directly linked with Israeli military presence in the South of Lebanon and the establishment of a Palestinian State. It was Hezbollah's struggle against Israel that made it popular among some Lebanese people in general and Lebanese Shiites in particular. Its struggle against Israel legitimized the party's possession of arms; a legitimization codified in the Taef agreement-the agreement that has regulated the Lebanese political life since the end of the cold war.

Hezbollah's shift from a resistance to a Lebanese political party was partly successful because, to start with, Hezbollah has a large popular strong base and also because, as mentioned earlier, Hezbollah is ingrained in the economical and social aspects of the Lebanese system, whereby the party provides educational, social, and health services to its partisans. When it was claimed that Hezbollah's armed activities were no longer needed, Hezbollah argued that it, and only it, can guarantee Lebanon's protection from Israel's violations of the Lebanese sovereignty

¹⁷⁴ Eyol, Zisser. "Hizballah: New Course or Continued Welfare". Middle East Review of International Affairs. Vol.4, No.3. September 2000, p 1.

simply because the army is ineffective and inexperienced in such warfare. Moreover, Hezbollah declared that it would cease its military activities only when all the Lebanese detainees in Israeli prisons are returned and only when Lebanon regains its sovereignty over the Shebaa Farms. Finally, Hezbollah said that it will not give up its arms as long as Palestinians were still armed inside Lebanon and other political parties still have intentions of nationalizing them.

It is certain that Hezbollah will not accept any peace treaty or accord signed between Lebanon and Israel. The party's long anti-Jewish struggle dating back to the times of the prophet will not cease anytime soon. Hezbollah was always aware of its complex situation, and it was counting on the Syrian presence in Lebanon to defend it and its weapons. Indeed, the party knew that at some point, its weapon will be questioned by the Lebanese people. However, what Hezbollah could not expect were the 9/11 terrorist attacks. After the Taef accord, and in order "to avoid clashes between the government and the resistance, Hezbollah proposed working along a dual path: a path of resistance and liberation not subjugated to the negotiation channel, and another political path followed by the government in pursuit of the implementation of UN resolution 425, which called for Israel's complete withdrawal from Lebanon."¹⁷⁵

Finally, the party argues that the Shebaa Farms are Lebanese property. Hezbollah is very aware of the complexity and the challenges, for that it is

¹⁷⁵ Qassem, Naim. "Hezbollah: The Story from Within." Saqi, Beirut 2005, p 107.
<http://www.naimkassem.org/materials/books/hizbullah/hizbullah.htm> Accessed on May 2008.

taking advantage of the sectarian divisions in the country. By making sure that the Lebanese people will never reach a point of agreement regarding the actual disarmament of Hezbollah, the party seems to be strengthening its Shiite base. At that point, Hezbollah's calculations seem to be Machiavellic and rooted in the party's ideology. The unilateral Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon constituted a major blow to Hezbollah both on the internal and external levels. Israel had believed that by leaving south Lebanon, Hezbollah would no longer be legitimate and therefore would be forced to surrender its weapons. Nonetheless, Hezbollah was smart enough to engage and participate directly in the Lebanese government in order to earn its legitimacy as a national resistance from it.

Since its establishment in 1982, Hezbollah was subject to the United State's direct criticism whereby the "US categorized the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon as a form of Terrorism."¹⁷⁶ The United States did not miss any occasion to stand against the party and its activities. According to Naim Qassem, during the 2000 Israeli withdrawal, the United States did its best to picture the liberation process as the implementation of UN resolution 425. After the Israeli Withdrawal, the United States mounted its calls for a redeployment of the Lebanese army, hence nullifying the role of the resistance. The United States significantly increased its pressure on the Lebanese government after the Israeli withdrawal "to promulgate the notion that Hezbollah should be dealt with as a terrorist organization."¹⁷⁷ America's pragmatic

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p.246.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p.248.

foreign policy in the region is despised by Hezbollah as it is always shifting to suit its interests and the Israelis’.

Following the events of September 11, 2001, Hezbollah issued the following communiqué denouncing the attacks “does the United State’s administration really plan to strike back at the perpetrators of the recent attacks and their sponsors, or does it want to take advantage of those tragic events to widen its hegemony over the world and pursue even more deeply its unfair policies, which have degenerated to such a level of hatred amongst the many different peoples and governments of the world... We feel sorry for the murder of innocent people in any part of the world and our Lebanese compatriots, who were victims of Zionist massacres in Qana and other places which the United States administration had refused to condemn at the time.”¹⁷⁸ Hezbollah’s anger against the United State’s administration is very obvious in this communiqué; the party even considers that the United States is to blame for the 9/11 attacks because America’s own actions had generated anti-US hatred hence the 9/11 attacks. As we can see, in Hezbollah’s statement, the attacks are not labeled as “terrorist acts”, they are simply regarded as “tragic events” and a “killing of innocent people”. The communiqué helps one understand more Hezbollah’s stand vis-à-vis the United States and therefore understand Hezbollah’s current actions and reactions to mounting US pressure against it. After the 9/11 events, Hezbollah realized that it was in critical situation and so, as we can notice, in the communiqué and a number of party’s officials’

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p.250.

speeches, Hezbollah took the cautious measure of not showing and expressing its opinion with respect to the United State's war on terror. Hezbollah's precaution speeches became very rhetorical.

Iran has been accused of state terrorism because it supports Hezbollah and is suspected to be in the process of acquiring nuclear weapons. Hezbollah clearly rejects these accusations, but does not do so publicly because the party avoids intervention in Iranian internal affairs.

III. Relationship with Palestinians:

It was previously said that the Shiites of the South were major sufferers from Palestinian activities and Israeli retaliation. Even though the Shiites suffered from Palestinian military operations, they came to realize that they also shared a common goal with the Palestinians: fighting Israel. In fact, Hezbollah's Lebanese resistance had its roots in the Palestinian struggle against Israel. The party once stated "let us not forget our responsibility of supporting the Palestinian people, and hence the association between the Palestinian cause and our own daily realities and how the Palestinian issue reflects on Lebanon and the entire region."¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, Hezbollah argued that all Arab countries are suffering from Israel's illegitimate presence and actions in Palestine and those Israeli actions do not only target the Palestinian people. Rather the entire Arab nation, and more, the entire Muslim nation.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 266.

Nawaf el-Moussawi, the Foreign Affairs Officer at Hezbollah, argues that Hezbollah supports the Palestinians' right to resistance to Israeli occupation, and that Hezbollah is willing to support the Palestinian resistance by providing financial help and military expertise. In fact, the party invites the Palestinians to follow its model. Also Hezbollah advocates the Palestinians' right in Lebanese refugee camps to better civil, social, and humanitarian rights and conditions.

Finally, Hezbollah rejected as it still does the naturalization, or giving the Lebanese citizenship to the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon because the party strongly advocates the Palestinians' right to return to their country and their right to Palestine as their nation-state. Moreover, the party rejects such naturalization because it fears the demographic changes that will come with such an action. While Hezbollah feared the Palestinians' naturalization, Lebanese Christian political leaders feared their armed presence that has been legitimized in the 1969 Cairo Agreement. Many scholars argued that the Palestinians constituted a state inside the Lebanese state. The Palestinians' presence in Lebanon has cost Lebanon a lot, for the Palestinians did not limit themselves to the struggle against Israel. The Palestinians had played a major role in the Lebanese war, for they had established alliances with one party against another, further aggravating the sectarian divisions of the country. Even more interesting is that no Arab country hosting Palestinian refugees, except Lebanon, permits these refugees to deploy their arms outside or inside their camps. No single Arab country, except Lebanon, permits the Palestinians to operate against

Israel from its borders; yet, all Arab countries encourage and support the Palestinian military activities taking place on the Lebanese southern frontier.

IV. Hezbollah after the Hariri assassination:

Hezbollah's armed presence on the Lebanese soil became very critical after Prime Minister Hariri assassination. Lebanon served for rapprochement that culminated in the adoption of many UNSC resolutions regarding the Lebanese case and Hezbollah. Hezbollah in its March 8, 2005 political rally clearly distinguished itself from what is known as the majority governmental bloc. The May 2005 elections witnessed an alliance between Hezbollah and the Hariri camp in some areas. The alliance was meant to reassure Hezbollah about its future: "Hezbollah needed a legitimacy, which it could have only earned from the Lebanese government; and therefore, it decided to join the government and be directly engaged with the everyday decision making of the country."¹⁸⁰ Directly after the parliamentary elections, problems emerged between the two, and their alliance was broken. This alliance that had emphasized for the first time a Sunni-Shiite union, signalled when it broke, the beginning of Muslim confessional or sectarian division.

The breaking of the Hezbollah-Hariri alliance was exploited by the Druze leader Walid Jumblat, in Hezbollah's view "to further isolate Hezbollah and to punish it for its continuous relations with Syria." Jumblat had taken such a stand to

¹⁸⁰ International Crisis Group. "Syria after Lebanon, Lebanon after Syria." Middle East Report, No. 39, 12 April 2005.

strengthen the role and parliament representation of the Druze community in the Lebanese political system. Then Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nassrallah announced "from now on we are prepared to take full responsibility at all levels of state institutions."¹⁸¹ The 2005 elections allowed Hezbollah to become part of the cabinet therefore allowing it to protect its armed resistance and influence Lebanon's foreign policy. That way Hezbollah could ensure that the government will protect and defend the military activities of the party.

V. Conclusion:

While Hezbollah had radically refused to disarm in the past, after the 2005 elections, it began to consider the possibility of disarmament if it were to follow Lebanese dialogue and complete Lebanese consensus. This transitional phase was accompanied by a very important Christian move; a memorandum of understanding concluded between Hezbollah and the Free Patriotic Movement. Hezbollah's alliance with the Aounist bloc broke its political isolation and secured it a real Lebanese political role. Hezbollah's memorandum with General Michel Aoun's argument that a Lebanese consensus is needed when it comes to Hezbollah's disarmament judging it unacceptable for any foreign country to force the disarmament of Hezbollah but rather leave this serious matter to the Lebanese themselves.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 20.

Today, a national dialogue is needed in order to resolve important political issues, mainly the issues outlined in UN resolution 1559. Nasrallah's position in the dialogue to take place shall be strong and weak. The party's strength shall be attributed to its alliance with Aoun and to its armament. Its weakness goes back to the fierce opposition of the majority bloc. As long as there is an Arab-Israeli struggle, there is no question of disarming Hezbollah, the party therefore constituting a de-facto state within the state. It seems that such a dilemma will not be resolved soon.

CHAPTER VII

JULY WAR 2006

I. Introduction

During 2006, and because Iran and Syria were themselves under pressure, they used their allies in Lebanon and Palestine to influence the Lebanese political and security scene. Because Tehran was facing a nuclear crisis, the Iranian Mullahs were aware that only a major breakdown of the region's new "by born" democracies and peace could deflect the crisis away from Tehran. In fact, Ahmed Nijad's ambitions to make of Iran an international power were being opposed by an international intention to deprive Iran of its nuclear power. Simultaneously, the elections taking place in Iraq, despite the terror in that country, indicated the birth of a new political system in that country that would eventually have a future impact on Iran itself. In contrast, Syria was being isolated as a result of the UN's investigation in the Hariri assassination, and that convinced the Assad regime that an activating of the Gaza and Israeli-Lebanese borders is needed to distract public and international opinion from the UN report. And for years, since 2000, Hezbollah, the party still considered a terrorist organization by the US was diligently building its hyper military arsenal across the country, infiltrating the Lebanese army and avoiding

major clashes with Israel. However, on Bastille Day's commemoration Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah ended a long era of preparedness, indicating that the time has come for a qualitative Jihad.¹⁸²

Lebanese factors

In addition to the regional injunctions to strike Israel in order to focus the international attention on the Arab Israeli conflict, numerous "Lebanese" factors also led Hezbollah to ignite the borders with the enemy. Back in March 2005, the leaders of Hezbollah watched the enormous Lebanese masses march against Syria, and indirectly Hezbollah. Not only was one of the largest demonstrations in the history of the Middle East, but it was also a combination of multiethnic and multi-religious groups, including Christians, Druze, Sunnis, and even some Shiites who had defied Hezbollah's "sacred" character. The withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon indicated the implementation of the second item of the UNSCR 1559, which called for the disarmament of fundamentalist and foreign militia. A third factor also contributed to weakening Hezbollah's position; the anti-Syrian coalition's winning the majority in the Parliament through an electoral alliance with Hezbollah during the May-June 2005 legislative elections. The 2005 Cedars Revolution was one of the most significant threats the Khomeini movement had to face since its inception. Hence, to ensure its survival, Hezbollah needed to neutralize the outcomes of the revolution as much as it could.

¹⁸² Phares, Walid. "Hezbollah's Iranian war in Lebanon." George Mason's University: [History News Network](#), 23 July 2006

By early July 2006, Hezbollah had completed its preparations for a return to the top. Hezbollah was already playing a major political Lebanese role. Hezbollah's alliance with the Parliament speaker Nabih Berri and with General Michel Aoun's Parliamentary bloc enabled it to paralyze the Parliament, preventing it from issuing a number of decisions. Hezbollah also engaged with the other political forces of the country in the so-called national dialogue concerning the party's weapons, mainly to gain time and avoid the application of the 1559 UN resolution. Hezbollah also attempted to divide the Lebanese diasporas by implanting agents linked to the Syrian-Iranian axis. It has also been said that Hezbollah played a major role in reactivating pro-Syrian and Jihadist networks in Lebanon and within the Palestinian camps. Moreover, the party was held responsible for the distribution of weapons among allied militias and for the military training of some of the members of these militias. Finally, and most important of all, the party was capable of deploying a system of rockets and long range artillery aimed at Israel in most Lebanese southern mountains.¹⁸³

Having achieved the following in Lebanon, and being ordered to do so by its regional sponsors, Hezbollah decided to make use of its Armageddon. As a matter of fact, Hezbollah had developed its own theory of inerrability which it based its so-called "victories" during the Lebanese war against the United States and France in the 1980s and against Israel and the pro-Israeli ex-South Lebanon Army in the

¹⁸³ Ibid.

1990s. In short, Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah's team of advisors was convinced that a spectacular operation against Israeli military would:

1. Shed light on the "struggle with Israel" in Lebanese politics, thus embarrassing and cornering the Lebanese Government with respect to issues such as the disarmament of Hezbollah.
2. Expect a harsh Israeli retaliation, good enough to attract world condemnation, but not strong enough to change political realities in Lebanon.
3. Would signal the beginning of a series of skirmishes with Israel and an all-out assault on the Siniora cabinet and the partisans of the Cedars Revolution, which were to be accused of treason and collusion with the Zionists.

II. Beginning of the conflict

At around 8:07 AM on July 12, 2006, Hezbollah launched diversionary rocket attacks on Israeli military positions near the Israeli coast and the border village of Zar'it, as well as on the Israeli town of Shlomi and other villages.¹⁸⁴ Simultaneously, a Hezbollah ground force was crossing the border into Israeli territory to attack two Israeli armoured Humvees patrolling the Israeli side of the borders, near Zar'it. Hezbollah's operations resulted in killing three Israeli soldiers, injuring two others, and seizing two (Master Sergeant Ehud Goldwasser and First Sergeant Eldad Regev).¹⁸⁵ Five more Israeli soldiers were killed during the operation

¹⁸⁴ "Day-by-day: Lebanon crisis - week one." [BBC News Online](#). 19 July, 2006.

¹⁸⁵ "Israel/Lebanon Under fire: Hizbullah's attacks on northern Israel." [Amnesty International](#). 14 September 2006.

and an Israeli tank was destroyed on the Lebanese side of the border during the unsuccessful attempt to rescue the two seized soldiers.

Hezbollah named the attack “Operation Faithful Promise” based on Hezbollah’s leader Hassan Nasrallah’s public pledges over the prior year and a half to seize Israeli soldiers and swap them for the four Lebanese prisoners held by Israel, namely: Samir Kuntar (a Lebanese citizen convicted of murdering Israeli civilians and a police officer); Nassim Nisr (an Israeli-Lebanese citizen tried and convicted for spying on Israel); Yahya Skaf (a Lebanese citizen whom Hezbollah claims was arrested in Israel, in spite of Israeli denial); and last, Ali Farran (a Lebanese citizen arrested by Israel).¹⁸⁶

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah claimed that Israel had not kept its previous promise with the party to release these prisoners, and since diplomacy had failed, a military attack was the only remaining option.¹⁸⁷ He also declared that: “No military operation will return the Israeli captured soldiers... The prisoners will only be returned in one way: indirect negotiations and prisoner trade”.¹⁸⁸

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert described the kidnapping of the two soldiers as an “act of war” performed by the sovereign country of Lebanon,¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Press Conference with Hasan Nasrallah, “Understanding the Present Crisis”, UPC, 12 July 2006.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Olmert, Ehud: “We were attacked by a sovereign country.” Ynetnews, 12 July 2006.

stating that “Lebanon will bear the consequences of its actions”¹⁹⁰ and promising a “very painful and far-reaching response.”¹⁹¹ Israel also blamed the Lebanese government for the raid, as it was carried out from Lebanese territory. In addition, Hezbollah had two ministers serving in the Lebanese cabinet at the time of the attack.¹⁹² In response to Olmert’s accusations, Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora denied any knowledge of the raid, stating that Hezbollah had to bear responsibility for its actions.¹⁹³ An emergency meeting of the Lebanese government reaffirmed this position.¹⁹⁴

The Israeli Defense Forces began attacking targets in Lebanon with artillery and airstrikes hours before the Israeli cabinet met to discuss a response. Moreover, the Israeli air force was bombing bridges, roads, and even, the Rafic Hariri Beirut International Airport, these attacks resulted in 44 civilian deaths.¹⁹⁵

On that same day, July 12, 2006, the Israeli cabinet decided to authorize the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister, and their deputies to pursue a

¹⁹⁰ Olmert, Ehud: “Lebanon is responsible and will bear the consequences”, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 July 2006.

¹⁹¹ Fletcher, Martin. “Regional tensions fuel Lebanon-Israel clashes” ms.NBC, 12 July 2006.

¹⁹² Alon, Gideon. Aluf, Benn. Amos, Harel. and Yoav, Stern. “Israel holds Lebanon government responsible for Hezbollah attack.” Haaretz, 13 July 2006.

¹⁹³ Statement by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora. The Manila Times, 17 July 2006.

¹⁹⁴ Qawas, Nafez. and Raed El Rafei. “Siniora's Cabinet makes clear it had nothing to do with what happened.” Daily Star, 13 July 2006.

¹⁹⁵ “Timeline of the July War 2006.” Daily Star.

previous plan which they had proposed for action in Lebanon. The decision had also taken into consideration Prime Minister Olmert's insistence that Israeli Defense Force avoid Lebanese civilian casualties whenever possible.¹⁹⁶ Israel's Chief of Staff Dan Halutz declared, "If the soldiers are not returned, we will turn back Lebanon's clock 20 years"¹⁹⁷ while the head of Israel's Northern Command Udi Adam declared, "this affair is between Israel and Lebanon. Once Israel is inside Lebanon, everything is legitimate - not just southern Lebanon, not just the line of Hezbollah posts."¹⁹⁸ On July 12, 2006, the Israeli cabinet announced that Israel would "respond aggressively and harshly to those who carried out and are responsible for today's action."¹⁹⁹ The cabinet's communiqué stated, in part, that the "Lebanese government is responsible for the action that has taken place on its soil."²⁰⁰

On July 16, the Israeli cabinet released another communiqué explaining that, although Israel had engaged in military operations in Lebanon, its war was not against the Lebanese government. The communiqué clarified that: "Israel is not fighting Lebanon but the terrorist elements there, which are led by Nasrallah and his cohorts; these terrorists who have taken Lebanon hostage of their

¹⁹⁶ Operation "Just Reward", the Response of the IDF to Hezbollah Aggression from Lebanese Territory, Israeli Prime Minister's Office, 12 July 2006.

¹⁹⁷ Associated Press. "Israel authorizes 'severe' response to abductions." CNN, 12 July 2006.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ "Israel-Hizbullah conflict: Victims of rocket attacks and IDF casualties." Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Special Cabinet Communiqué - Hizbullah attack, 12 July 2006.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

own regional interests, thereby creating Syrian- and Iranian-sponsored terrorist enclaves of terrorism in the country.”²⁰¹

When asked in August about the proportionality of the Israeli response, Prime Minister Olmert stated that the “war initiated not only by the killing of eight Israeli soldiers and the abduction of two, but by the shooting of Katyusha and other rockets on the northern Israeli cities on that same morning. Indiscriminately, he added “no European country would have responded with such a restrained manner as Israel did.”²⁰²

III. Hezbollah’s action

During the July War, Hezbollah fired between 3,970 and 4,228 rockets. An estimated 23% of these rockets hit residential areas inhabited mainly by civilians.²⁰³ Cities stricken included Haifa, Hadera, Nazareth, Tiberias, Nahariya, Safed, Shaghur, Afula, Kiryat Shmona, Beit She’an, Karmiel, and Maalot, and dozens of Kibbutzim, Moshavim, and Druze and Arab villages, as well as the northern West Bank.²⁰⁴ Hezbollah also engaged in guerrilla warfare with the IDF (Israeli Defensive Forces), attacking the IDF from strategic positions. These attacks

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Farrel, Stephen. “The Times Interview with Ehud Olmert: Full transcript.” The Times, 2 August 2006.

²⁰³ “Hezbollah's Rocket Campaign against Northern Israel.” A Preliminary Report. Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, 31 August 2006..

²⁰⁴ “Major Attacks in Lebanon, Israel, and the Gaza Strip.” New York Times, 14 August 2006.

by small, well-armed units caused serious problems for the IDF, especially through the use of sophisticated Russian-made anti-tank guided missiles. According to the Merkava tank program administration, fifty-two Merkava main battle tanks were damaged, twenty-two tanks were penetrated by missiles, but only five tanks were destroyed.²⁰⁵

After the initial Israeli response, Hezbollah declared an all-out military alert. Hezbollah was estimated to possess 13,000 missiles at the beginning of the conflict.²⁰⁶ The Israeli newspaper Haaretz described Hezbollah as a trained, skilled, well-organized, and highly motivated infantry was equipped with the cream of modern weaponry from the arsenals of Syria, Iran, Russia, and China.²⁰⁷ Hezbollah's satellite TV station al-Manar reported that during the Israeli war, Hezbollah had fired two major liquid-fuel missiles developed by Iran, Fajr-3 and a Ra'ad -1.²⁰⁸

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah defended the attacks, saying that Hezbollah had "started to act calmly. The party focused on Israeli military bases, and didn't attack any Israeli settlement; however, since the very first day, the enemy was attacking Lebanese towns and murdering civilians. Hezbollah combatants had destroyed military bases, while the Israelis had killed civilians and targeted

²⁰⁵ "The war in Numbers." *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 23 August 2006

²⁰⁶ Gardner, Frank. "Hezbollah missile threat assessed." *BBC News Online*, 3 August 2006.

²⁰⁷ Tal, Avraham. "Justified, Essential and Timely." *Haaretz*, 31 July 2006.

²⁰⁸ Hezbollah Rockets. 30 July 2006 <<http://www.globalsecurity.org>>. Accessed on May 2008

Lebanon's infrastructure."²⁰⁹ Hezbollah apologized for shedding Muslim blood and called on the Arabs of the Israeli city of Haifa to flee. The party continued to use unguided rockets to shell northern Israel.²¹⁰

On July 13, 2006 Hezbollah launched rockets at Haifa for the first time, hitting a cable car station along with a few other buildings. On July 14, 2006 Hezbollah attacked the INS Hanit, an Israeli Sa'ar 5-class corvette enforcing the naval blockade with a what was believed to be a radar guided anti-ship missile. Four Israeli sailors were killed, and the warship was severely damaged. On July 17, 2006, Hezbollah hit a railroad repair depot, killing eight workers in Haifa. Hezbollah claimed that this attack was aimed at a large Israeli fuel storage plants adjacent to the railway facility. Haifa is home to many strategically valuable facilities such as shipyards and oil refineries.²¹¹ On July 18, 2006, Hezbollah hit a hospital in Safed in northern Galilee, wounding eight.²¹² On July 27, 2006, Hezbollah ambushed the Israeli forces in Bint Jbeil and killed eight soldiers. After the attacks, Israel claimed that it had also inflicted heavy losses up on Hezbollah.²¹³ On August 3, 2006, leader Nasrallah warned Israel against hitting Beirut and promised retaliation against Tel

²⁰⁹“Hezbollah leader promises enemy 'more surprises'”, Islamic Resistance Lebanon, 17 July 2006.

²¹⁰“Nasrallah urges Arabs to leave Haifa.” USA Today, 9 August 2006.

²¹¹“2 wounded in Hezbollah strike on Haifa”, The News-Sentinel, 17 July 2006.

²¹² “Israel hammers at Lebanese infrastructure.” The Associated Press. 17 July 2006.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

Aviv in this case.²¹⁴ He also stated that Hezbollah would stop firing missiles when Israel ceases aerial and artillery strikes of Lebanese towns and villages.²¹⁵

On August 4, 2006, Israel targeted the southern outskirts of Beirut, and later in that same day, Hezbollah launched rockets at the Hadera region.²¹⁶ On August 6, 2006, twelve army reservists resting near the Lebanese border were killed in the deadliest barrage of Hezbollah rocket attacks so far. Three Israeli civilians were also killed in an attack conducted at dusk at the port of Haifa.²¹⁷ On August 9, 2006, Nine Israeli soldiers were killed when the building they were taking cover in was struck by a Hezbollah anti-tank missile and collapsed. On August 12, 2006, twenty-four Israeli soldiers were killed; the worst Israeli loss in a single day. Among those twenty-four soldiers, five were killed when Hezbollah shot down an Israeli helicopter, a first for the militia. Furthermore, Hezbollah claimed that the helicopter had been attacked with a Wa'ad missile.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ "Lebanese Hezbollah warns of rocket attacks at Tel Aviv if Beirut struck." People's Daily, 4 August 2006.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Raved, Ahiya. "For first time: Hizbullah Targets Hadera area." Ynetnews, 4 August 2006.

²¹⁷ "Rocket Barrage Kills 15 Israelis Close to Border". NY Times.

²¹⁸ Derfner, Larry. "24 soldiers killed in South Lebanon Saturday." Jerusalem Post, 12 August 2006.

IV. Israel's action

During the campaign, Israel's Air Force had flown more than 12,000 combat missions, its Navy had fired 2,500 shells, and its Army had fired over 100,000 shells.²¹⁹ Large parts of the Lebanese civilian infrastructure were destroyed, including four-hundred miles (640 km) of roads, seventy-three bridges, and thirty-one other targets such as Beirut's Rafic Hariri International Airport, and numerous ports, water and sewage treatment plants, electrical facilities, twenty-five fuel stations, nine-hundred commercial structures, up to three-hundred-fifty schools, two hospitals, and fifteen-thousand homes. Some one-hundred-thirty homes were damaged.²²⁰

Israeli Defense Minister Amir Peretz ordered commanders to prepare plans to defend Israeli civilians. One million Israelis had to stay near or in bomb shelters or security rooms, with some 250,000 civilians evacuating the north and relocating to other areas of the country.²²¹

V. Position of Lebanese government

While Israel initially held the Lebanese government responsible for Hezbollah's attacks due to Lebanon's failure to implement Resolution 1559 and

²¹⁹ "The war in Numbers." *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 23 August 2006.

²²⁰ "Mideast War, by the numbers." *Associated Press via the Guardian*, 18 August 2006.

²²¹ "Hezbollah's Rocket Campaign against Northern Israel." A Preliminary Report. *Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs*, 31 August 2006.

disarm Hezbollah, Lebanon disavowed the raids, stating that the Lebanese government did not condone them, and that Israel had its own history of disregarding UN resolutions.²²²

In interviews, Lebanese President Emile Lahoud criticized Israel's attacks and supported Hezbollah, noting Hezbollah's role in ending Israel's previous occupation of southern Lebanon.²²³

Although Israel had not declared war on Lebanon, and had only attacked Lebanese governmental institutions which it suspected of being used by Hezbollah,²²⁴ many Lebanese and Arab statements called upon the United Nations to stop Israel's attacks on Lebanon and reach a comprehensive ceasefire. A United States-France draft resolution was presented; it included grounds for Israeli withdrawal, and the stop of military actions; however, it rejected mutual prisoner exchange as inadequate. Many Lebanese accused the American government of stalling the ceasefire resolution to support Israel. On the other hand, Hezbollah accused the Lebanese government of secretly supporting the Israeli attack on Lebanon. On August 7, 2006, a plan of seven steps was proposed to ceasefire. It mentioned the deployment of 15,000 Lebanese army troops in the Lebanese south to fill the temporary gap between the Israeli withdrawal and the UNIFIL deployment.

²²² Statement by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora. Daily Star (Lebanon). 17 July 2006.

²²³ Brown, Matt. "UN Diplomacy May not end Conflict": Lebanese President. August 11, 2006.

²²⁴ "Israel's counter terrorist campaign." Behind the Headlines. 15 August 2006.

VI. Casualties

A. Hezbollah

It is difficult to estimate Hezbollah's casualty figures in the war. Claims and estimates by different groups and individuals ranged from 250 to 1,000. Hezbollah's leaders claimed that 250 of their fighters were killed in the conflict, while Israel estimated that its forces had killed 600 Hezbollah fighters.²²⁵ In addition, Israel claimed to be able to list the names of 532 dead Hezbollah fighters. UN officials and Lebanese government officials estimated that up to 500 Hezbollah fighters had been killed.²²⁶ A Stratfor report cited "sources in Lebanon" as estimating the Hezbollah death toll at "more than seven-hundred and increasing," while British military historian John Keegan estimated that the figure could be "perhaps as many as 1,000."

B. Lebanese civilians

Israeli airstrikes on Tyre, Lebanon on July 21, 2006, resulted in mass graves for civilians. The smaller coffins had been made for children. As a matter of

²²⁵ Associated Press. "Army chief says Israel may have to confront Hezbollah attempts to re-arm." International Herald Tribune, 21 February 2007.

²²⁶ Bishop, Patrick. "Peacekeeping force Won't Disarm Hizbollah, A UN official estimated the deaths at 500" Telegraph.co.uk, 22 August 2006.

fact, Lebanese sources stated that one third of the Lebanese civilian casualties of the war were children under thirteen years of age.

The Lebanese civilian death tolls even those released by the Lebanese government, are difficult to assess as most published figures do not clearly distinguish between civilians and Hezbollah combatants. In addition, Hezbollah fighters are difficult to identify since many do not wear military uniforms. However, it has been widely reported that the majority of the Lebanese killed were civilians, and the UNICEF estimated that thirty percent of those killed were children under the age of thirteen.²²⁷

The Lebanese police office and the Lebanese Ministry of Health, citing hospitals, death certificates, local authorities, and eye witnesses, declared the death toll to be at 1,123 (37 soldiers and police officers, 894 identified victims, and 192 unidentified ones). Moreover, the Lebanese Higher Relief Council (HRC) declared the death toll to be at 1,191, citing the Ministry of Health and the Lebanese police office, as well as other state agencies. The Associated Press estimated the figure to be 1,035. In February 2007, the Los Angeles Times reported that at least 800 Lebanese had been killed during the war,²²⁸ while other articles have estimated the death toll to be at least 850.²²⁹ The Lebanese Higher Relief Council estimated the

²²⁷ Dolan, Sabine. "The humanitarian challenge in Lebanon." UNICEF, 9 August 2006.

²²⁸ Ellingwood, Ken. "Israeli Premier Testifies on Hezbollah War, At least 800 Lebanese and more than 150 Israelis were killed." Los Angeles Times, 2 February 2007.

²²⁹ Reuters Associated Press. "Israel may have misused cluster bombs in Lebanon, U.S. says." International Herald Tribune, 29 January 2007.

number of Lebanese injured to be 4,409, fifteen percent of whom were permanently disabled.²³⁰

The death toll estimates excluded those Lebanese killed after the fighting stopped by land mines or Israeli cluster bombs that did not explode during the war. Till 2008, these bombs have killed twenty-nine people and wounded two-hundred-fifteen civilians, ninety whom were children.²³¹

C. Israel Defense Forces

Estimates for the Israeli Defense Force troops killed range from one-hundred-sixteen to one-hundred-twenty.²³² The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs gives two different figures: one-hundred-seventeen and one-hundred-nineteen, the latter of which contains two Israel Defensive Force fatalities that occurred after the ceasefire. An estimated four-hundred-fifty Israeli soldiers were wounded in Lebanon.²³³

D. Israeli civilians

As Hezbollah was firing its missiles, most Israeli civilians had fled the region or taken refuge in bomb shelters. Hezbollah missiles had killed forty-three

²³⁰ "Rebuilding Lebanon Together, 100 days after," Lebanon Higher Relief Council. 21 November 2006

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² "Israel-Hizbullah conflict: Victims of rocket attacks and IDF casualties." Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 2006.

²³³ "Costs of war and recovery in Lebanon and Israel." Reuter. 9 July 2007.

Israeli civilians. In addition, 4,262 civilians were injured, of which thirty-three were seriously wounded, sixty-eight moderately, one-thousand-three-hundred-eighty-eight lightly, and two-thousand-seven-hundred-seventy-three were treated for shock and anxiety. According to the Human Rights Watch, "These bombs may have killed 'only' 43 civilians, but that says more about the availability of warning systems and bomb shelters throughout most northern Israel and the evacuation of more than 350,000 people than it does about Hezbollah's intentions."²³⁴

VII. Ceasefire

Terms for an effective ceasefire had been drawn and revised several times over the course of the conflict, yet a successful agreement between the two parties took several weeks to establish. While Hezbollah had maintained the desire for an unconditional ceasefire,²³⁵ Israel had insisted upon a ceasefire conditioned by the return of the two seized soldiers.²³⁶ Lebanon frequently pleaded the United Nations Security Council to call for an immediate unconditional ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah. John Bolton confirmed that the United States and United Kingdom, with support from several Arab leaders, delayed the ceasefire process. The

²³⁴ Whitson, Sarah Leah. "Hezbollah's Rockets and Civilian Casualties." Counter Punch via Human Rights Watch website. 22 September 2006.

²³⁵ "Hezbollah wants an unconditional ceasefire." CTV.ca. 17 July 2006.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

ceasefire had become an evident truth only when it became apparent that Hezbollah would not be easily defeated.²³⁷

On August 11, 2006 the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved of the UN Security Council Resolution 1701, in an effort to end the hostilities. The resolution was accepted by the Lebanese government and Hezbollah on August 12, 2006 and by the Israeli government on August 13, 2006. The ceasefire became effective as of 8:00 a.m. on August 14, 2006.²³⁸

A senior member of the Lebanese cabinet reported that two Hezbollah cabinet members had declared, prior to the ceasefire, that the party is not ready to disarm south of the Litani River. Similarly, an eminent Hezbollah official denied any intention of the party disarming in the south. However, Israel stated that it would stop its withdrawal from South Lebanon if Lebanese troops were not deployed there within days.²³⁹

VIII. Since the ceasefire (UN 1701)

With the implementation of the ceasefire and the passing of Resolution 1701, it was noted that assessing the final results of the war would depend on the implementation of UN Resolution 1701. Israeli leaders clearly expressed what they considered to be essential conditions for the implementation of

²³⁷ "Bolton admits Lebanon truce block," [BBC News Online](#).

²³⁸ "Lebanon truce holds despite clashes," [CNN](#). 14 August 2006.

²³⁹ "U.N.: Cease-fire begins Monday", [CNN](#). 12 August 2006.

UN Resolution. Thus, Israel's Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni noted that she expected the increased UN military force to be deployed according to the resolution in order to "control the passages on the Lebanese-Syrian border; to aid the Lebanese army in deploying properly; and to fully implement UNSCR 1559, particularly with respect to disarming the Hezbollah."²⁴⁰ Prime Minister Ehud Olmert concurred with this view. The deployment of the Lebanese army to the South together with the increased number of UNIFIL forces represented an achievement. It reduced the freedom Hezbollah had enjoyed prior to the war. The UNIFIL deployed, Hezbollah had to take their presence into account. Yet the remaining key issue was whether the new arrangements would serve to reduce Hezbollah's military capacities permanently or whether the movement would, by intimidating the UNIFIL and the Lebanese army forces, succeed in rebuilding its strength.

Consequently the UNIFIL and the Lebanese army made little effort to prevent the smuggling of arms and equipment across Lebanon's eastern border with Syria.²⁴¹ Hezbollah has thus been able to rebuild its medium and long-range missiles north of the Litani, replacing the Iranian Zelzal and Fajr missiles that had been destroyed during the war. The Zelzal missile has a range of two-hundred-fifty

²⁴⁰ Efraim, Inbar. "How Israel Bungled the Second Lebanon War." *Middle East Quarterly* Summer 2007, pp. 57-65 <http://www.meforum.org/article/1686>

²⁴¹ "Ban in Lebanon: Arms Smuggling from Syria Could Threaten Ceasefire," *Associated Press*, 31 March 2007.

kilometers, enabling it to reach Tel Aviv.²⁴² Israel also believed that Hezbollah had tripled the number of C-802 land-to-sea missiles in its possession and had created an anti-aircraft unit.²⁴³ Israel provided the United Nations with evidence for these claims and raised the issue of arm smuggling across the Lebanese-Syrian border. A team of investigators sent by the UN Security Council confirmed the Israeli allegations.²⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the presence of Lebanese and UN forces along the southern border undoubtedly curtailed Hezbollah's freedom of operation to a large extent. And as such, Israel considered Hezbollah's loss of freedom as one of the war's positive achievements.

IX. Winograd Commission Report

According to the Winograd Commission Report, the Second Lebanese War was regarded as a "missed opportunity" especially that "Israel had initiated a long war which ended without a defined military victory". The report proceeded to state that "a semi-military organization of a few thousand men was able to resist, for a number of weeks, the strongest army in the Middle East, which had enjoyed full air superiority, and not to mention an advantage in size and technology." Furthermore, Hezbollah's continuous missile attacks during the war were not dealt with

²⁴² Barak, Ravid. "Israel to UN: Hezbollah Has Tripled its Land to Sea Missile Arsenal." Haaretz, 31 October 2007.

²⁴³ Ibid

²⁴⁴ Lederer, Edith M. "Security Along Lebanon-Syria Border Too Lax to Stop Arms Smuggling, UN-Appointed Team Says." Associated Press, 26 June 2007.

effectively. Following a long period of using standoff fire power and limited ground activities, the IDF launched a large scale ground offensive close to the UN Security Council's resolution which imposed a ceasefire. "This offensive did not result in military gains and was not completed."²⁴⁵

Later in the Report, the Commission stated that "[a] decision [was] made in the night of July 12th to react (to the kidnapping) with immediate and substantiated military action and to set... ambitious goals." This decision had immediate repercussions in that subsequent decisions were mainly limited to a choice between [a] "a short, painful and unexpected blow to Hezbollah" and [b] "bringing about a significant change of the reality in the South of Lebanon with a large ground operation, [occupying]... the South of Lebanon and 'cleaning' it of Hezbollah." "The fact that Israel had went to war before it had decided which option to select and without a clear exit strategy, all led to serious failures in the decision making processes."

With respect to the war's achievements, the Commission had reported that "SC resolution 1701, and the fact that it was adopted unanimously, were an achievement for Israel."²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ English Summary of the "Winograd Commission Report." New York Times, 30 April 2007.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

XIII. The future of Hezbollah?

Hezbollah waged in Lebanon an Iranian War with Syrian backing. The party knew how to start the war, but it had not secured its ending. The July War had unpredictable effects on the Lebanese politics, on Arab governments, and even, on the international community. Moreover, Hezbollah and its allies had declared that more “surprises” are to be expected: more rockets and suicidal attacks on Israel and more resistance in the war against Israel and the United States. But “surprises” could be both positive and negative. The future of Hezbollah remains uncertain as it depends on foreign influence, namely Iran and Syria as well as some Lebanese Shiites who disagree with the party’s policies.

Ever since the party was created, Hezbollah had always declared that its weapons shall only be used against the enemy, Israel, and for the sole purpose of defending Lebanon. However, these weapons were used inside the country for political gains and purposes and against other Lebanese sects, mainly the Sunnis, in Beirut on May 7, 2008.

After the May 7 events, all the party’s past promises, announcements, and declarations had fallen and proved to be false, proving that Hezbollah still needs to work hard in order to fully adapt and merge into the Lebanese political system. Indeed, and although the party’s strategy have changed significantly throughout the years, Hezbollah still needs to implement further changes to become a truly Lebanese political party that adheres to the Lebanese political system.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Hezbollah's new strategy is characterized by the following: the party's participation in the national elections, its extensive social engagement in the community, and the party's mounting military strength. Hezbollah's record of regular participation in the elections and representation in the parliament deviates from the party's past political aims that included opposing the Lebanese system and developing a religious resistance for the establishment of an Islamic state. Another indication of the party's changing political strategy is its considerable political influence on the Shiite constituency in Lebanon, a political influence that is most evident in Hezbollah's political mass rallies. Also Hezbollah's social activism, represented in numerous grassroots organization and programs, demonstrates the party's commitment to enhancing the Shiite community in Lebanon.

At the beginning of its transformation into a legitimate political party, Hezbollah seemed to be heading towards a total metamorphosis. However, later, (especially after the 2006 July war and May 7, 2008 events) it became evident that Hezbollah's transformation would not be imminent, mainly due to the party's independent military force. Hezbollah, along with Amal, remains the only Lebanese

political party engaging in a military conducts that extend beyond Lebanese borders. Hezbollah should reconsider its military equipment and display more willingness to respect state sovereignty.

This study of Hezbollah's political adaptation has drawn on two valuable themes. The first is that political parties need to change. Parties are born as organizations with specific political agendas and goals. And since domestic power relationships, regional and international trends, constituency size and needs, as well as socio-economic conditions are in a constant flux, a party's activities and strategies may become susceptible to rapidly shifting political roles. Therefore, parties should act intelligently when faced with such changes. Adaptation and transformation apart from being the vital survival strategies for parties are also fundamental attributes of their functions.

Hezbollah was created by Iran as a radical religious resistance force during the turbulent period of Lebanese war and Israeli occupation. Since the party's creation, the political environment surrounding it changed dramatically. In a brief overview, numerous important changes can be recounted: the ending of the Lebanese war, Syria's new hegemony and final withdrawal from Lebanon, the leadership change in Iran, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the end of the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon, the 9/11 attacks, the American campaign against terror, Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's assassination, the Lebanese national reconciliation, and the UN Resolutions 1559 and 1701.

Furthermore, efficient political adaptations and transformations are indicative to understand parties' ideologies and fundamental cores. When parties undergo adaptation, they normally tend to preserve their essential traits and change secondary facets. However, and in case they are forced to alter their basic traits, they tend to postpone the change as much as they can, since they deem that core changes could damage the party as a whole.

Hezbollah's initial goal was to abolish the sectarian system and to replace it with the Shari'a and establish an Islamic State. Recent events indicated that Hezbollah still has not abandoned its goals, although it has temporarily chosen Lebanese nationalism over Islamic universalism. The Party's temporary choice may be a strategic option, a sporadic transition until Hezbollah finds the opportunity to establish its initial goals. As assumed by professionals, the party's military aspect would disappear in the long run; the more obvious Hezbollah's objectives will become the more rejection the party will have to face. Other Lebanese parties, especially those having their own sectarian orientations, might criticize Hezbollah's religious ideology, weapons, and particular visions of Lebanon. The author's opinion is that, in the future, Hezbollah will be distinguished and characterized by a combination of Islam and Shiite communalism.

The second lesson to be learned from Hezbollah's experience of transformation is that an inclusive political system promotes cooperation. Hezbollah eventually decided to adapt to and operate within the Lebanese system, the same

system that it had once vehemently negated and even vowed to overthrow. The Shiite-Maronite pact Between Hezbollah and General Aoun has its pros and cons.

SWOT analysis of a Shiite-Maronite new national pact:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Because he is charismatic, Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah is heard by the whole Lebanese community and even by Christians.	Hezbollah is receiving money from Iran. Therefore, the party is obliged to stay directly related to Iran and its policies.	Hezbollah is finding a common ground with General Michel Aoun.	Hezbollah is still armed and considers its weapons its destiny.
Nasrallah's speech is changing from radical fundamental to nationalism.	Hezbollah is using its weapons inside the country to gain political benefits, therefore, denying what it had stated earlier: weapons are only for resistance against Israel	Christians are no longer scared from going to Shiite cities and vice-versa.	Hezbollah is after all, an Islamic party with its own ideological beliefs (Wilayat Al Faqeeh).
Hezbollah is choosing the resistance path instead of the negotiations path in the Middle Eastern conflicts. Hezbollah's role as a resistance in the Arab world has been successful so far and the party seems to be continually winning.		During the 2006 July War, many Christians provided Shiites with shelters in their safe regions.	Education at Hezbollah Schools is typically religious and ideological; religious basics are taught to students starting from the age of three and contradict the charter of national co-existence.
After Hezbollah's win in the July War, it became evident for the first time that Israel is paralyzed and could do nothing about the party's fierce resistance.			
Hezbollah is supporting the idea of returning some of the			

lost powers in the Taef agreement to the Lebanese Christian president.			
Shiites supported a new balanced parliamentary electoral law.			
The Christians are better represented in the Government of National Unity after the Doha Agreement.			

The party concluded that joining the Lebanese political system would be more beneficial, politically, than pursuing a radical religious agenda. Hezbollah's experience validates the assumption that, if the Lebanese political system is open enough to tolerate alternative political views and democratic enough to provide different participants with various opportunities to access political power, even religious extremists may embrace this system and gain legitimacy.

Any political group that seeks political power might resort to illegal measures, often involving the use of violence, to gain that power, especially when all legal paths are closed. Marginalization and under-representation of a certain party or political group would engender a sense of the party's illegitimacy. Such is the case of authoritarian regimes in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or Syria where political systems are strictly controlled and opposition parties, even those including Islamic groups, are excluded.

Hopefully, Hezbollah's prospect is to diminish its military role in stages and strictly operate within the Lebanese context as a Shiite religious party. A successful political adaptation to the Lebanese system would require an extremely difficult challenge: the disarmament of the party. In a sectarian political system, disproportional military power is always a potential cause of distrust and discord. If Hezbollah does not discard its weapons, it would create an imbalance in the Lebanese sectarian system.

Hezbollah's aim to adapt fully to the Lebanese political system will differ in two points from the central focus of this study. First, Hezbollah needs to evolve from a militia to a legitimate political force. The transformation will be a difficult challenge for the party, especially since the process concerns an armed resistance, armament being Hezbollah's *raison d'être*. It is very likely that an intensive internal conflict would occur within the party between a minority of pragmatists who are ready for dismantling its armed wing and the majority of traditionalists who see resistance as the party's indispensable commitment, and therefore refuse to give up their weapons. Additionally, the party would have to modify its identity, ideology, and strategy to compensate for the loss of the major pillar of its foundations, its military armament. Moreover, if the process of disarmament were to happen, it should involve possible meddling from Syria and Iran, the regional supporters of Hezbollah's resistance against Israel- another factor that would add to the complexity of the challenge of disarming Hezbollah.

Another challenge to Hezbollah's transformation would be the party's probable avoidance to admit and therefore conform to the external changes that have been going on in the region and the world. These include the shift in domestic politics occurring in the post-Hariri assassination period and the consequent Syrian withdrawal, the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian peace process, as well as the international pressures on Lebanon from the UN Resolutions 1559 and 1701. In sum, external demands and stimuli could surpass the party's internal tolerance and willingness to change.

These challenges sharply contrast with the changes the party went through the very first stages of its transformation, which were mainly imposed by the party's own initiatives based on their calculation for survival and power expansion.

Despite the many difficulties the party will have to face and the amount of time needed for Hezbollah's disarmament, disarmament remains the party's only option to ensure its future survival as a political force in Lebanon. Also, according to western countries, it is unlikely that Hezbollah would become a powerful regional threat to Israel. It is not that the party does not possess the capacity to become so, but rather that it is constrained by different domestic, regional, and international political environments and trends.

During the 2006 July war, Hezbollah had taken by itself the decision to engage in the war, disregarding the opinion of the Lebanese government. As a result of the war, the country was destroyed, and a thousand innocent people were

killed. The war had shown to what extent Hezbollah's weapons had become a serious threat to the whole country. If the party maintains its Islamic ideology and furthers its culture of war, then its future is defiantly uncertain, and the Lebanese would not accept the party. So far, Hezbollah has not changed its original ideological beliefs; it has only modified its techniques in dealing with national problems and policies.

Hezbollah had always announced that its weapons will never be used inside the country against other Lebanese. However, the party did use its weapons against other Lebanese as it invaded Beirut using its armed forces on May 7, 2008. Hezbollah's use of military weapons increased the suspicions of Christians and Sunnis towards the party's real intentions concerning its Lebanese domestic agenda. The May 2008 events were followed by the Doha agreement, which led to the establishment of the Government of National Unity, and initiated a new era in Lebanon.

Another issue that is important to mention is the Sunni-Shiite hidden war. The war is basically between Iran and its proxies, and Saudi Arabia which is backed by the United States. The heart of the United States-Saudi alliance represents a new effort to combat Iran and its allies in the Arab world. The alliance between the two was established after the July war in Lebanon. The Saudi alliance with the United States resulted in sending large amounts of Saudi money to Lebanese Sunnis, Christians and Druze to counter Hezbollah's influence. The Saudis and Americans

also cooperated in aiding Lebanon's Internal Security Force, the national police that effectively reports information to the Sunni Prime Minister, Fouad Siniora.

The Saudi-American cooperation against Iran has extended to Yemen, where the two jointly assisted the Yemeni government in destroying an Iranian-funded group linked to followers of Shiite cleric Hussein al-Houthi, who was murdered in 2004.

Before concluding, it is important to elaborate on Syria's role and influence. The Saudis have tried to corner Syria at the beginning then they were requesting its assistance to help stabilize the situation in Iraq. Indeed, the Saudis began to ease tensions with Syria at the March 2008 Arab League Summit, after Syrian President Bashar al-Assad privately apologized to King Abdullah for calling him and other Sunni Arab leaders "half men" for not assisting Hezbollah during the 2006 July war in Lebanon. American officials believe, however, that the Saudis are keeping in contact with Syrian opposition groups.

To conclude, the future steps that the new United States administration will adopt will have a major influence on the region as a whole. Moreover, observers still need to answer numerous questions pertaining the new alliances in the Arab world, the rising roles of Turkey, Qatar, and Syria in the region, the future of Iranian Nuclear research, and the political stands to be adopted by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. When such questions would be answered and issues become clearer, so will the region's future, and eventually, Hezbollah's.

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