

## Chapter 5

# Hizballah and the Logic of Political Participation

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This chapter focuses on the development of the Shi'i Islamist movement Hizballah from its inception in 1982 in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon until the present. Hizballah is undergoing a transformation from a radical, absolutist resistance movement to an increasingly accommodationist political organization. To explain this transformation, what follows charts the origins of the movement, and explores how changes in the composition of its support base, the Lebanese political system, and regional conditions have affected its goals and behavior. Particular attention is paid to the effects of Hizballah's inclusion into the political system of postwar Lebanon, and to the impact of Israeli policy on Hizballah's evolution. Among other factors, including changes in the foreign policies of Iran and Syria and the attainment of a limited balance of power between Hizballah and the Israeli army, it is maintained that inclusion into the political system has had a moderating effect on Hizballah's domestic goals and methods and to a lesser extent its resistance operations. It has not dimmed the leadership's opposition to Israel, or its support for the Palestinian resistance, including its controversial tactic of targeting civilians, but participation in the political system has introduced a logic of electoral accountability that has made escalatory resistance operations more costly.

Hizballah emerged in direct response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and for much of the 1980s, its main activity consisted of resistance—including the then locally innovative tactics of suicide bombing and hostage-taking (although the precise extent of its involvement in the latter is disputed). It called for an Islamic revolution and an Islamic state in Lebanon, under the aegis of the Islamic Republic of Iran and modeled on Ayatollah Khomeini's *wilayat al-faqih* (rule of the supreme jurist). To realize such a state, Lebanon had to be freed from Israeli occupation. But it also had to be “liberated” from its secular, sectarian structures and shed

its imperialist roots as an “artificial” Christian-dominated client state.<sup>1</sup> From its inception, Hizballah refused to accept the legitimacy of the Lebanese state, or its rigid sectarian system of allocating political quotas to each of the religious communities (‘corporate consociation’). Lebanon was to be abolished and subsumed under the soon-to-be liberated areas of the Middle East—starting with Iraq, which, in Hizballah’s eyes, was at that time in the process of being freed by Iran from its U.S.-sponsored secular regime. Hizballah was messianic on foundation, infused with an optimism created by the Iranian revolution and its own early successes against the Israelis and the multinational force stationed in Lebanon.<sup>2</sup>

Although Hizballah still proclaims theoretical allegiance to the notion of an Islamic state, in practice it has abandoned calls for its establishment in Lebanon. Instead, it advocates the return of “humanitarian” values such as integrity, accountability, and noncorruptibility to public life and for the discriminatory practice of political sectarianism to be replaced with a meritocratic democracy. Calls for the abolition of the Lebanese state have been replaced with impassioned defenses of Lebanon’s territorial integrity, its national interest, and the right of all its citizens, including Christians, to return. The party’s campaign themes have become largely secular, focused on Lebanese concerns, and devoid of messianic content.<sup>3</sup>

At a practical level, Hizballah has expanded from an underground militia to a political party with a highly efficient apparatus, an extensive welfare network and a small semi-professional resistance organization. Its resistance activities have become circumscribed by rules of engagement agreed upon indirectly with the Israeli armed forces. Though Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000 has not caused Hizballah to cease operations, it has limited its activities largely to a small disputed border area called the Shebaa Farms and carefully calibrated them so as not to escalate the conflict. It has by and large accepted the sovereignty of Lebanon’s coercive apparatuses, the police and the army, and only challenges this sovereignty in its insistence on the right to resist. It has entered the political system and repeatedly won around 8 percent of Parliamentary seats, constituting the largest opposition party bloc. It has been one of the most successful parties in the municipal elections.<sup>4</sup> The composition of its constituency has changed to include secular supporters, while the profile of its top leadership has changed from predominantly clerical to a mixture of clerics and professionals. It has reached out to Christians and entered into alliances with both Christian and Sunni politicians.

To explain Hizballah’s evolution from a radical, absolutist underground resistance to an increasingly accommodationist political party with a resistance agenda, I will take a closer look at the origins of Hizballah—the reasons behind its emergence, the profile of its support base, its ideology, its political culture, and the power resources at its disposal. Having explored

the factors that can be seen to drive the organization's goals and methods, I will then examine how these factors have changed.

## Origins of Hizballah

Hizballah emerged out of three converging phenomena: the 1970s political revival among Lebanon's Shi'a; the Islamist euphoria created by the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran; and the resistance to Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

Marginalized socially and politically,<sup>5</sup> Lebanon's Shi'a were galvanized into action by a number of separate events. Modernization and the onset of civil war in 1975 had begun to undermine the authority of the Shi'i notable families and led to an expansion of the proportion of Shi'a available for political mobilization.<sup>6</sup> Socioeconomic changes created both a new counter-elite and an impoverished underclass within the Shi'i community. Increased proximity, as a result of urbanization, highlighted the discrepancy between the status of the Shi'a and that of the other religious communities, reinforcing their sense of communal injustice.

Politically, these changes found expression in two movements: one emanating from the Shi'i clergy as they were shedding their traditional political quietism, the other from the various left-wing political movements emerging regionwide. This second trend, represented by Lebanese parties such as the Communist Party and the numerous Palestinian militias of the PLO that had descended on Lebanon following their ousting from Jordan in 1970, played a secondary role in the emergence of Hizballah by serving as a catalyst for political mobilization among the Shi'a.<sup>7</sup>

The religiously inspired trend—out of which Hizballah emerged—was dominated by two social movements: the Movement of the Disinherited and the Lebanese Islamic Da'wa Party, a branch of the regionwide Da'wa Party which had its headquarters in Najaf, Iraq. The first was established in the 1970s by Imam Musa al-Sadr, son of a prominent religious leader. Its goal was to counter the corruption and ineffectiveness of the Shi'i political elite and to improve the social and political position of Lebanon's Shi'a. It did not question the legitimacy of the Lebanese state or its multiconfessional nature, but sought to change the inter-confessional balance of power. Following the outbreak of civil war in 1975, the movement established a political party and militia called Amal. Dwarfed initially by the multiconfessional militias to which the majority of Shi'a were drawn, Amal expanded exponentially after 1978.<sup>8</sup>

During the 1970s, Amal attracted both religiously minded and secular Shi'a. Following Sadr's disappearance in 1978, the party began to abandon its religious roots and, under the leadership of lawyer Nabih Berri, became increasingly secular, creating a dilemma for its religiously minded supporters. The process leading up to Berri's 1983 decision to join the National

Reconciliation Committee (the de facto national government of the day) without demanding significant reforms was for those already disenchanted with his secular direction the final straw. Hussain al-Musawi, one of the co-founders of Hizballah, is a good illustration of this trend. Vice president of Amal until 1982, he was ousted following a dispute with Berri over Amal's direction and formed "Islamic Amal,"<sup>9</sup> one of the organizations to coalesce under the umbrella of Hizballah. Each of Hizballah's three secretaries general was similarly once a member of Amal.<sup>10</sup>

The Lebanese Da'wa Party, and its affiliate the Lebanese Association of Muslim Students, was closely linked to Sayyed Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, the son of an Ayatollah from South Lebanon and well known across the Shi'i community for his charisma and erudition. Inspired by Da'wa founder Sayyed Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr, Fadlallah believed that (Shi'i) Islam contained the solution to the region's problems and advocated the creation of a society based on Islamic principles. In contrast to Amal, Fadlallah and his followers questioned the very legitimacy of the Lebanese state. Theirs was a regional vision, based on affiliation to Islam.

Fadlallah was one of the main forces behind the growth of the Lebanese Da'wa Party. But similarly significant was the steady expulsion of Lebanese clerics studying in Najaf under the increasingly anti-Shi'a Iraqi Ba'th regime, culminating in the deportation of more than a hundred in 1977. Having studied under Da'wa founder Baqr al-Sadr, many gravitated toward the Lebanese Da'wa Party and established *hawzats* (Shi'i religious academies) which propagated al-Sadr's philosophy. Initially concentrating their activities in the social and spiritual realms, Da'wa supporters became progressively politicized, spurred on by the successes of Amal and the Communist Party, the socioeconomic changes that drove these trends, the Iranian revolution of 1979, and the Israeli invasion of 1982.<sup>11</sup>

The Iranian revolution galvanized both Amal and the Da'wa Party, serving as an inspiration for religiously inspired political activism, and making available new financial and political opportunities for specifically Shi'i parties. It sealed the shift from quietism to activism among the Shi'a region-wide. And it brought to power a regime that was both self-consciously seeking closer links with Shi'i communities elsewhere and had a particular interest in countering Israeli influence in the region, regarded as the local face of American imperialism. Lebanon thus became an important focus of Iranian foreign policy.

The Israeli invasion of 1982 both provoked resistance among the Shi'a, who suffered disproportionately, and annihilated the Palestinian militias—the invasion's objective—leaving a power vacuum. It precipitated Iran's sending a contingent of Revolutionary Guards. And it helped resolve the tension Da'wa supporters experienced between rejection of the system and the desire to affect political change, by providing a political focus away from the debate surrounding the legitimacy of the Lebanese state, and by final-

izing the enclavization of Lebanon—thereby enabling dreams of establishing an Islamic order within the enclaves where activists were dominant.<sup>12</sup>

The 1982 invasion also encouraged the Syrian regime to cultivate a new proxy resistance force. The Syrian army had been in Lebanon since Syria's 1976 intervention yet it sought to avoid engaging the Israeli army directly. Amal, Syria's long-time ally, had initially sided with the Israelis because of its own struggle against the Palestinian militias, leaving Syria without a proxy to counter the Israeli occupation. The various religiously motivated groups that were to become Hizballah were ideal candidates because of their zeal, their roots in local society and their access to an external state sponsor, Iran, which would field the expenses.<sup>13</sup>

Hizballah stepped into the vacuum created by these various trends. It replaced the Palestinian militias as a dedicated resistance force. It replaced Amal as Iran's, and briefly Syria's, favored Shi'i party and as the new champion of religiously inspired Shi'a, whose number had grown since the Iranian revolution. At the same time, the seeds were laid for Hizballah to take up Amal's mantle of championing the marginalized—secular as well as religiously oriented—as Amal became increasingly absorbed into the elite pact governing the country.

Hizballah's early goals and behavior can be explained in part by the profile of its support base and the political climate it emerged from. The bulk of Hizballah's activists came from the ranks of the Da'wa Party and from among the more religiously inclined of the secularized Amal movement. Some switched from the Communist Party or the leftist Palestinian militias, disillusioned by their ineffectiveness in confronting the invasion or inspired by the Iranian revolution to rethink their secular orientation. The majority of Hizballah's leaders and supporters were not members of the traditional elite families. Most of its members came from lower- to lower-middle-class backgrounds,<sup>14</sup> and while an increasingly significant number of these were university graduates or people with professional aspirations,<sup>15</sup> few belonged to the nouveau riche class that Amal had come to represent.<sup>16</sup>

The less reason Hizballah's members had to be loyal to the existing system, the more attractive Iran's radically different system became. Amal's cooption into the political system confirmed their belief that only a full-scale revolution would end Shi'i marginalization within the Lebanese system. The Iranian model of self-consciously Shi'i activism was particularly attractive because it claimed to be a global movement ushering in a new age of justice. Thus, not only did membership of Hizballah transform a marginalized, local youth into a partner in a global revolution, but it also translated the local humiliations of Israeli occupation into symbols of global imperialism and offered a means of becoming part of a global jihad against American-Israeli imperialism.<sup>17</sup>

The fact that Hizballah consisted largely of a network of clerics and their followers, and had emerged in opposition to an increasingly secular Amal,

partly explains the particular attraction of Khomeini's rule of the jurists. For the clerics, Khomeini's system offered either the prospect of political power or the comfort that power would be in the hands of fellow clerics. For their followers, the rule of the jurists offered the prospect of access to power. For both, Khomeinism was a way to distance themselves from Amal.

Hizballah's early radicalism was in part a function of the situation in which it arose. It emerged in the aftermath of a bloody invasion, which according to one estimate caused 19,000 deaths, 32,000 casualties and damage to 80 percent of villages in the south.<sup>18</sup> The increasingly brutal nature of the ensuing occupation consolidated the initial sense of outrage. Because Hizballah was conceived in the midst of Lebanon's brutal civil war, its methods reflected the prevailing violent climate—although Hizballah typically limited its violence to Israelis and Shi'i rivals, while refraining from targeting other religious communities in the conflict. The presence of Iranian Revolutionary Guards and the support Hizballah received from the hard-liners in the Iranian regime ensured that the hard-liners within Hizballah prevailed. It is thus not surprising that Hizballah's initial approach was one fueled by utopian and uncompromising radicalism and that its methods were those made popular by the violent practices of the civil war.

### Transforming Influences

To understand Hizballah's transformation, it is necessary to analyze the changing nature of Hizballah's three main sources of power: local popular support, Iranian sponsorship and Syrian patronage. Hizballah's initial goals can be shown to be at least in part a reflection of the nature of these different sources and the prevailing political climate at the time, so changes in the political environment and its sources of power are likely to affect the organization's direction. A fourth factor concerns Israeli policies toward Hizballah, which have affected both the establishment and the evolution of the organization profoundly. I will discuss these separately.

Though Iran was instrumental in creating Hizballah and has been one of its main sponsors, Iran's influence has diminished. If intelligence estimates are to be believed, not only have Iran's financial contributions dropped to but a third of Hizballah's overall estimated income but also Hizballah's power has come to rest increasingly on the popular and financial support it enjoys within Lebanon and the Lebanese diaspora, and the backing of the Syrian government.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, Hizballah has become less dependent on Iranian support for its survival. In addition, after the death of Khomeini, Iranian support for Hizballah's initial, radical goals became more muted. Moderates came to circumscribe the power of the hard-liners, particularly in the Foreign Office (at least until the Ahmadi-nejad election). Iran's relations with the Lebanese state also improved, par-

ticularly since the end of the civil war.<sup>20</sup> Though the foreign policy goals of Iranian hard-liners and moderates differ, both have abandoned the active pursuit of spreading the Islamic revolution—which is one reason why Hizballah has ceased calling for an Islamic state in Lebanon.<sup>21</sup> Iran's support for the resistance has also become somewhat more muted. While Iran still encourages Hizballah's hostility toward Israel and continues to arm Hizballah's resistance wing, it has no interest in provoking a full-scale confrontation with Israel. The pressure exerted by Iran on Hizballah to cease shelling northern Israel in an attempt to prevent another Israeli invasion in 1992 illustrates the point<sup>22</sup>—as did the intervention of Iran's foreign minister in April 2002, urging Hizballah to end its worst confrontation with the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) since the latter's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000.<sup>23</sup> The fact that Iranian relations with the Palestinian resistance have improved since the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000 also means that Iran has less need of a "second front" in Lebanon to maintain its influence in the Levant and keep pressure on Israel—although this development has increased the incentive for Hizballah to become directly, if covertly, involved in the Palestinian resistance.

Hizballah's capacity to continue functioning as a resistance movement remains largely dependent on Syrian acquiescence—even after Syria's withdrawal. Syrian support for the resistance is circumscribed by *realpolitik*. It can no longer count on the support of the Soviet Union, a fact that has affected the state of its army and made it more dependent on international investment. Its hegemonic position in Lebanon until 2005 had been partly dependent on Western acquiescence. At the same time, Syria continues to need a proxy resistance force—both to keep pressure on Israel to return the Golan Heights and because it has built its ideological identity on resisting Israel. In the absence of economic development and political liberalization, the Syrian regime is likely to continue to rely on resistance as a legitimizing tool.

Syria's support for Hizballah's resistance activities comes at the price of restrictions in the political realm. Until recently, Hizballah has been prevented by the Syrian government from capitalizing electorally on its military successes, in line with Syria's policy of divide and rule. In each national election, Hizballah has sought to forge an alliance in opposition to Amal. On each occasion, the party was forced into an alliance with Amal to prevent Hizballah from usurping Amal's political position. As Hizballah's support base has expanded since its entry into politics in 1992, Syrian control over Hizballah has weakened. Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon has further diluted Syria's ability to control Hizballah. But Syria can still restrict Hizballah's ambitions and influence its future direction. Hizballah's decision to ally itself to Amal in the June 2005 elections—even after Syria's withdrawal—may partly be indicative of this influence (even though the logic behind the alliance was largely informed by the need to maintain a united

Shi'i front in the face of a strong Christian anti-Syrian coalition and an upsurge in calls for Hizballah's disarmament, both locally and internationally).

Locally, Hizballah's relationship with its support base has changed with its expansion from a small underground militia to a political organization encompassing a political party, an extensive welfare network and a semi-professional resistance wing. Where once its popularity depended solely on its military prowess, it now depends on the performance of all three wings of its organization.

Hizballah's resistance force is of limited significance in "military" terms. Though strong enough to oust Amal from Beirut's southern suburbs during the civil war and to affect the IDF's withdrawal in 2000, it fails to match the separate or combined strength of the Lebanese and (until recently) Syrian armed forces present in Lebanon. By the late 1990s, Hizballah's resistance arm was estimated at 300–500 experienced fighters and a body of up to 3,000 "reservists." By contrast, the Lebanese and resident Syrian forces numbered 53,300 and 25,000–35,000 respectively in 1999.<sup>24</sup> Not only do these armies dwarf Hizballah's erstwhile opponent, the IDF, which only had around 1,500 soldiers in Lebanon during the 1990s, but the skills Hizballah developed in this struggle are of little use against either the Syrian or the Lebanese army. The Syrians lack the democratic constraints placed on the Israeli forces (as illustrated by the bloody 1982 massacre inflicted upon the insurgents of Hama),<sup>25</sup> while attacking fellow Lebanese, including Shi'i co-nationals, would greatly undermine Hizballah's political standing.

Hizballah's resistance wing has proven invaluable for gaining political legitimacy and continues to be of central importance to the party's self-image. Hizballah has gained in political standing from its early successes in driving the IDF from Beirut, through to winning the right to remain armed when all other militias were disarmed at the end of the civil war and its role in contributing to the chaotic withdrawal of the IDF in 2000. Its parliamentary candidates have consistently run on a "resistance ticket," calling themselves the Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc, asking voters to repay the sacrifice of martyrs with their vote. To the Shi'a, Hizballah's resistance success is particularly empowering. But because of Hizballah's attempts to represent the resistance as Lebanese and because of Israel's heavy-handed policies, Hizballah's continued commitment to the resistance has gained it respect beyond its Shi'i constituency.

In the context of the "war on terror," the presence of foreign forces in Iraq, and the continuation of hostilities in neighboring Israel/Palestine, resistance is likely to continue to play an important part in Hizballah's rhetoric. Hizballah's victory in the 2005 national elections has indeed been interpreted by Hizballah's leadership as an endorsement of its resistance agenda.<sup>26</sup> However, rhetoric notwithstanding, the actual activities of the



resistance, when compared to Hizballah's welfare and political efforts, have become increasingly significant in terms of their impact on Hizballah's political clout only, rather than in and of themselves.

Hizballah's welfare services have become an important source of popularity because of their extensiveness, their efficiency and their reputation for integrity. Where the state or Amal fail to deliver basic services, Hizballah steps in—whether it is a Christian village in the Bekaa valley cut off by an avalanche, or impoverished Shi'a in Beirut lacking water, electricity and sewerage services. Welfare activities are only indirectly translated into political capital, because those benefiting from the services do not necessarily support Hizballah. However, there is no doubt Hizballah benefits politically from its charitable investments. Almost from its inception, Hizballah has employed charities to offset the negative effects of Israeli offensives, partly from a sense of civic duty, inspired by Islam and a long clerical tradition of charitable activity among Shi'a, and partly to gain sufficient credit among the population to continue its resistance efforts. One of the reasons Hizballah has recently invested heavily in the south has been to counter the influence Amal has through its control over the government's reconstruction fund for the South. The services Hizballah provides in the southern suburbs of Beirut similarly seek to outperform Amal, not only among the Shi'a who are registered to vote in Beirut, but also among the many displaced residents who are still registered, and thus vote, in the South.

Funding for these activities comes from religious and charitable donations from allied states—in particular Iran which, especially in the early stages, funded most of Hizballah's charities<sup>27</sup>—and from individuals, both from inside Lebanon and from the Lebanese diaspora and Iranians with Lebanese links. The process of fundraising, whether for the resistance or for Hizballah's welfare institutions, plays an important role in the political mobilization of the community. Local fundraising is carried out with the help of small colored metal boxes on poles in strategic places throughout the urban landscape, or by volunteers standing with boxes and flags by the roadside. Though funds are being raised for particular charities associated with Hizballah, Hizballah benefits politically from the "brand" recognition.

The expansion of Hizballah's welfare services has introduced a conservatism that militates against radical resistance activities. The extensive investments Hizballah has made in the South, for instance, render Israeli retaliatory strikes more costly. The growth of those involved in charitable activities within Hizballah has expanded the constituency of those more interested in institution building and networking than in resistance per se. The movement's decision to expand its investments in areas most likely to be hit by Israeli strikes suggests that Hizballah as a whole has become more interested in, and reconciled to, a post-resistance phase—suggesting its

adherence to the goal of eradicating Israel may be tempered by pragmatic considerations.

The creation of a political party organization, finally, has done more than anything to change the relationship between Hizballah and its support base. That it was established at all was to a large extent a function of the ending of the civil war, the opening up of an autonomous political space and the Lebanese state's willingness (under Syrian tutelage) to invite Hizballah into the political realm—although internal changes and events in Iran similarly played a part. The reasons behind Hizballah's decision to play a full part in the new political system, and the effect of Hizballah's entry into that system are of such importance that they will be discussed in detail below.

### Factors Facilitating Hizballah's Political Incorporation

Incorporation of the erstwhile rejectionist Hizballah into the Lebanese political system was made possible by a number of developments. One factor was the transformation Hizballah was already undergoing as a result of both internal and external dynamics. The end of the Iran-Iraq war, spelling the end to the dream that the Islamic revolution would spread through Iraq to the Levant, and the death of Khomeini—and the subsequent rise of a less dogmatic elite in Iran—made it possible for internal debates and tensions to come to the surface. The routinization that any revolutionary movement undergoes and the expansion of Hizballah's welfare network had already encouraged the emergence of a more pragmatic trend. The expansion of charitable efforts had begun to change the composition of Hizballah's supporters and the very effort of setting up charities in cooperation with local communities had begun to have a moderating effect.

By the late 1980s the more fervent among Hizballah's supporters had begun to realize that Iran's brand of revolutionary Islam did not necessarily translate to Lebanon with its intensely multisectarian, pluralistic environment. Hizballah, moreover, lacked the power to enforce its vision without consent once the central state reemerged. During the civil war, when Hizballah had imposed its brand of puritanical Islam in the areas where it was dominant, it had alienated large sections of society. Within the enclaves, Hizballah had sufficient military muscle to weather local alienation, but when the civil war came to an end and the enclaves began to be reincorporated into the central state, Hizballah's control became increasingly conditional upon gaining popular support—just as all erstwhile militias were now forced to learn to resolve their differences without resorting to arms.

The pragmatic among Hizballah's leaders realized that both the resistance project and the dream of reshaping society according to Islamic principles would become untenable unless Hizballah adapted itself to the multiconfessional state that was likely to reemerge out of the civil war. In

the new political climate, a dogmatically Islamist resistance would not carry the support of the national government of Lebanon, potentially pitting Hizballah against both the Israelis and the Lebanese army. In a unified Lebanon, moreover, the prospects for establishing an Islamic state would be remote, particularly now that the expansion of the Iranian Islamic revolution had stalled. It was far from clear whether the secular regime in Damascus would be willing to back a dogmatically Islamist resistance at the cost of losing influence with other pro-Syrian parties in Lebanon. Willingness to compromise made political sense. A similar conclusion was reached by the pragmatic members of the government in Tehran who threw their weight behind the pragmatists within Hizballah.<sup>28</sup>

The 1989 restructuring of Hizballah's command structure, which sought more local accountability and less revolutionary "aloofness," was a reflection of these internal and external changes, as was the (electoral) ousting of Hizballah's hard-line secretary general Subhi al-Tufayli in favor of the more pragmatic Abbas al-Musawi in 1991. Musawi began the process of preparing Hizballah for entry into the political system in earnest—a move opposed by the Tufayli camp on the grounds that participation would legitimate the Lebanese state and compromise the Islamic state ideal. When Musawi was killed by an Israeli air strike in 1992, a candidate with an equally pragmatic disposition, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, was elected, suggesting that the pragmatists had won out over the dogmatists. Supporting this conclusion is the fact that the election boycott Tufayli and his followers organized fell spectacularly flat.<sup>29</sup>

Hizballah's entry into the political system was eased by the movement's increasing, though far from uniform or complete, commitment to consultative politics.<sup>30</sup> Parallel to the structural reforms of the late 1980s, Hizballah's political culture appears to have undergone a subtle change, away from a rigid centralism centered on the will of Khomeini, to a more consultative style of decision-making, still hierarchical but more responsive to the views of both a larger section of leaders and Hizballah's support base. Consultation with members and supporters in the process of policy formation has increased—as illustrated by the survey carried out to aid the leadership in deciding on whom to field as candidates for the 2000 national elections<sup>31</sup>—although consultations tend to follow a top-down rather than a bottom-up pattern and decisions are still taken centrally and without much transparency.<sup>32</sup>

The consultative approach took an institutional form in 1991 when the party resolved to encourage "the formation of residential and professional groups in each quarter of the southern suburbs," to gather local information, and facilitate the process of advocacy.<sup>33</sup> The institution of a triannual party conclave gathering together all members above the rank of district representative to elect those who will govern the party for the next three years was another manifestation of this shift.<sup>34</sup> Ideologically, this approach

is supported by the Qur'anic command to consult.<sup>35</sup> It is tempered, however, by the hierarchical nature of the clerical structure in Shi'i Islam.

A number of structural factors have facilitated Hizballah's shift toward consultation although none are determinant in and of themselves. One has been the expansion of Hizballah from a pure militia into the civic realm, introducing an operational logic that favors consultation for instrumental reasons. A charity is likely to be more effective—both in fundraising and in gaining grassroots cooperation—if it responds to the needs of its clientele. Another factor is Hizballah's position in the political system. As an outsider to the elite pact between the leading Maronite and Sunni players and Amal, and without a formal military to back up its claims to power, Hizballah must derive power from other sources and has turned to popular legitimacy to boost its political standing. It pays to canvass constituents' opinions regarding who to field for upcoming elections, so as to heed constituents' views if one wishes to retain their vote. That Amal portrays itself as a non-ideological party deriving its power primarily from traditional patron-client networks—often associated with corruption and nepotism—provides Hizballah with a ready-made “identity niche” for gaining popular legitimacy as Amal's supposed opposite: an ideologically motivated, incorruptible, meritocratic and more egalitarian party. The Qur'anic emphasis on consultation, equality and integrity offers a ready ideological framework. The need to distinguish itself from Amal provides an incentive to activate this framework—however incompletely.

This logic has been reinforced by the origins and composition of Hizballah's leadership. From its inception, none of Hizballah's leaders have been of particularly high standing in their religion's clerical hierarchy. The only person with such a profile, Sayyed Fadlallah, was never part of the day-to-day running of the movement and sought to stay aloof from party politics. The absence of a dominant, hierarchical figure facilitated the emergence of a more egalitarian and consultative style of decision-making—although this process was tempered by the need for “military” obedience, secrecy and the clerically inspired disposition toward hierarchy. The increasing heterogeneity of Hizballah's leadership has similarly encouraged a shift toward consultation by increasing the need to maintain party unity across differences.

The socioeconomic profile of Hizballah's constituency has reinforced this path. The majority of Hizballah's members come not from the traditional elite families, but from lower- to lower-middle-class backgrounds, and increasing numbers of these are university graduates or people with professional aspirations—particularly since the end of the civil war.<sup>36</sup> These qualities make Hizballah a typical counter-elite movement, outsiders with aspirations for power. For such a movement, the experience of exclusion may render the notion of organizational inclusiveness, and with it consultative practices, attractive. Particularly if those in power practice a more auto-

cratic form of politics, consultative practices become a favorable option, not just for instrumental but also for constitutive reasons, which make the idea of “consultation” a core element of the movement’s identity—if not always its practice.

A final factor encouraging consultative politics has been the effect of the end of the civil war on Hizballah’s relationship with its constituency. During the 1980s, a level of popular support was necessary for securing logistical assistance and hiding places. But in the general climate of war, not only had political activity become largely insignificant but also dissent was difficult to express. Ensuring high levels of popular support was thus unnecessary. With the reintroduction of a functioning central authority and regular elections, the calculus of popular support changed. In this new political environment, dissent could be expressed through a change in voting behavior. Silencing dissent became more difficult, not only because central authority had been restored but also because criticizing the resistance had become more acceptable for those not under occupation. At the same time, winning over new supporters became easier, as the arena of political contestation widened from the civil war enclaves to the entire liberated part of the country and as people began to feel more at ease with changing political persuasion. Consulting constituents was one way to gain support.

Internal changes aside, Hizballah’s entry into the political system would have been impossible but for four further enabling factors. The constitutional changes agreed upon in the Ta’if Agreement of 1989, which signaled the beginning of the end of the civil war, facilitated Hizballah’s incorporation. Under this agreement, hammered out under Syrian patronage by the existing elites (and thus excluding Hizballah), the ratio of Christian to Muslim in government was partially readjusted to reflect demographical changes and the office of Speaker, allocated to the Shi’a, was given more weight—thus beginning to address Shi’i grievances. The agreement also reiterated the original constitution’s commitment to ending political sectarianism.<sup>37</sup> Because the Shi’a generally regard political sectarianism as one of the causes of their marginalization—though the Shi’a are the largest minority in Lebanon, comprising some 40 percent of the population, the division of power is still skewed in favor of the Christians and the Sunnis—the reiteration of this commitment offered Hizballah the opportunity to make this its central goal rather than its earlier, unconstitutional goal of working toward an Islamic state.

Second, the Syrian regime, the unofficial hegemon in Lebanon until recently, needed a Shi’i opposition party in parliament to keep its, at times, truant ally Amal in check. Hizballah was the ideal candidate if it could be persuaded to tone down its Islamist goals. The fact that Syria and Iran had been close allies throughout the Iran-Iraq war and shared an aversion to Israel facilitated Syria’s task of persuading Hizballah to accept the new situ-

ation—even if this meant political compromise and accepting closer Syrian control over the resistance.<sup>38</sup>

The third enabling factor was the fact that neither the Lebanese constitution and electoral laws nor Hizballah's own "constitution" prohibited the participation of Islamist clergy in the electoral system. Though Lebanon's constitution was modeled on the French constitution, the French state's unbendingly secular dogmatism was not adopted. Instead, building on Ottoman practices, the Lebanese state recognized the political role clergy had historically played in their communities and allowed them to run for political office. This flexibility allowed an Islamist party such as Hizballah, which, at least in principle, rejects the separation of religion and politics, to enter Lebanese politics and field clerical candidates. Hizballah's "constitution," meanwhile, established from the start that participation in elections was an Islamically legitimate way to conduct politics.<sup>39</sup> The fact that Hizballah's goals included more than simply conducting an "Islamic resistance" and establishing an Islamic state, and could be restated in terms of a program for social justice, Shi'i emancipation, and continued national resistance facilitated the process of compromise for Hizballah's leadership.

Finally, the Lebanese state had a vested interest in binding Hizballah to its fate. Syria, of course, demanded that the Lebanese government welcome Hizballah into its system. But, Syrian interests aside, the government had two further reasons to coopt Hizballah. Its initially fierce opposition to both the very basis of the Lebanese state, and the way Lebanon was ruled by its elites, made the party a potential threat to the status quo. Cooption, it was hoped, would curb Hizballah's more radical impulses and induce it into accepting the multisectarian basis of the state.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, the Lebanese state needed a proxy resistance force that could exert pressure on Israel to withdraw, independently from the Lebanese state, thus making Israeli retaliatory actions against the state more problematic.

### Effect of Hizballah's Incorporation

Hizballah's entry into the political system has had two significant consequences. Incorporation entailed a commitment to refrain from violence against domestic rivals and submitting to the official mediation organs of the state—despite Hizballah being the only remaining armed militia in postwar Lebanon. Since 1992, Hizballah has by and large refrained from using violence to settle disputes with other parties, in sharp contrast to the intra-sectarian infighting of the 1980s between Amal, the Communist Party and Hizballah. When clashes do erupt between Hizballah and Amal, as they did in March 1993, Hizballah typically cooperates with the authorities in bringing the culprits to justice.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, when the Lebanese army killed 16 pro-Hizballah demonstrators in September 1993, the party refrained from using arms to seek revenge.<sup>42</sup> Though Hizballah's submission to state

authority is in part a function of the military imbalance between its forces and the Lebanese and, until recently, Syrian armies, cooperation would arguably not have been as extensive without the added disincentive of electoral losses.

Hizballah's turn to politics also profoundly affected the composition of its constituency. During the 1980s, members and supporters of the organization were predominantly religiously minded, and ideologically committed to the notion of *wilayat al-faqih*—although even then some were more interested in defending Lebanon and improving the lot of the Lebanese Shi'a. Though tensions existed from the start—as illustrated by the 1989 debate between “hard-liners” and “moderates” following the death of Khomeini—the movement was relatively homogeneous.

The 1990s saw the introduction of a new type of supporter. Once Hizballah's reputation as an efficient party of principle grew, nonpracticing or nominally religious Shi'a began to turn to Hizballah. Secular-minded businessmen became interested in Hizballah's anticorruption drive. Scions of old elite families realized that an alliance with this new party might prove advantageous.<sup>43</sup> Those benefiting from Hizballah's services, particularly if Amal had let them down previously, began to vote for Hizballah, as did those who were critical of the corrupt status quo or the lack of political will among the elites to confront the continuing Israeli occupation in the south. At the same time, an increasing number of Hizballah members were educated at secular institutions and pursued secular, as opposed to clerical, careers, resulting in a more heterogeneous membership profile.<sup>44</sup>

Once the Hizballah leadership realized that it had succeeded in attracting this ideologically heterogeneous constituency, it sought to both preserve and expand its influence among these “swing voters” in a process which social movement theorists call “frame alignment.”<sup>45</sup> This process was encouraged by the Lebanese electoral system, which rewards cross-sectarian, cross-ideological alliances and penalizes sectarian or ideological isolation.<sup>46</sup> Those parties that succeed in building an electoral list that is supported by candidates from all the relevant sectarian backgrounds tend to do better in the elections. The need to woo non-Shi'i electoral allies encourages frame adaptation, reinforcing the incentives for adaptation emanating from the increase in Hizballah's internal heterogeneity and its attempts at expanding its constituency.

One of the concrete results of this “frame alignment” has been the dropping of the call for an Islamic state in favor of an emphasis on humanitarian values derived from Islam, enabling nominal Shi'a and, to a lesser extent, people of other religions to subscribe to Hizballah's vision. The shift away from a focus on Iran and the Islamic revolution to a recognition of the legitimacy of Lebanon and a focus on building coalitions with Lebanon's Christians and other Lebanese parties is similarly an outcome of this process, as is Hizballah's increased focus on social justice and its use of a

purely secular language in parliament.<sup>47</sup> Though Islam is important to many of Hizballah's supporters, whether Hizballah strengthens Islam's hold over the public realm is of less significance to others than whether Hizballah tackles corruption and nepotism. The fact that, in a 1993 student survey, 70 percent of those who described themselves as having a low or medium level of religiosity supported Hizballah only serves to underline this observation.<sup>48</sup> It is therefore no surprise that Hizballah's insistence on the *hijab* or on working toward an Islamic state has lessened over the years.<sup>49</sup>

Hizballah's ability to carry out resistance operations against Israel has also been affected. Many of those voting for Hizballah representatives voted for them because of their reputation for good governance. Though the issue of continued resistance looms large in the mind of Hizballah's leaders, it does not necessarily loom as large in the consciousness of the general electorate—particularly since the withdrawal of the IDF in 2000. Whether or not Hizballah steps up its resistance activities is of potentially less relevance to them than whether Hizballah representatives will improve basic services—despite Hizballah's concerted efforts at creating a “society of the resistance” or resistance culture.<sup>50</sup> This is particularly pertinent to those with either a medium or a low socioeconomic status—for the former because they have much to lose in retaliatory strikes, for the latter because economic stability is vital for their very survival. Given the preponderance of both these categories among Hizballah supporters, Hizballah must pay close attention to the views prevalent among these categories to retain their support.

Before the IDF's withdrawal, a certain level of material damage and loss of life was acceptable to a sizable section of Shi'a, and Lebanese generally, even outside the occupation zone. The continued existence of a collective memory of suffering, the many links binding Shi'a across the line of demarcation, national pride, and the fact that Hizballah poured significant amounts of money into local welfare, all served to bolster support for the resistance. Even Christians who were often more concerned about the presence of Syrian troops than about the occupation of the south could give qualified support because the continued presence of Syrian troops was linked, in their minds, to the continued presence of Israeli troops in the south. However, qualified support for the resistance was unlikely to survive a protracted Israeli offensive in areas where a postwar “normality” had returned (unless Israel could be unambiguously blamed).

The changed dynamic between Hizballah and its electoral constituencies meant that the party increasingly had to weigh up the costs of its resistance activities to the electorate. Its willingness to agree to the tacit establishment of rules of engagement with the IDF can in part be explained by this change in dynamic. The agreement, negotiated verbally in 1993 in the wake of Israel's Operation Accountability and reaffirmed in writing (on the



part of Israel) in 1996 following Operation Grapes of Wrath,<sup>51</sup> stipulated that the conflict be confined to combatants and spare civilians. Given that, over the course of the conflict, Hizballah has killed only a handful of Israeli civilians in rocket attacks on northern Israel, against Israel's killing hundreds of Lebanese civilians, the agreement—if adhered to—was in Hizballah's favor in limiting the costs to the general population. The seriousness with which Hizballah took its commitment to avoid unnecessary escalation can be gleaned from the fact that between 1993 and 1996 its resistance wing reportedly breached the agreement on only 13 occasions—against Israel's 231 violations.<sup>52</sup> Hizballah's commitment to limit the cost to the civilian population did not prevent it from breaching the agreement in retaliation to what it saw as clear provocations—even if this provoked an escalation as it did with Operation Grapes of Wrath. However, it was typically careful to breach the agreement only when unambiguously provoked so that it could lay the blame for any escalation on the IDF.

Another outcome of this changed dynamic was an increase in the political will to end the hostage crisis. Though the extent of Hizballah's involvement in the hostage crisis is disputed,<sup>53</sup> it was unquestionably in a position to exert pressure on the hostage-takers, as the latter operated in Hizballah-controlled areas and often had familial links with party members. A number of external factors played a role in bringing the crisis to an end, including changes in the Iranian leadership, and in the position of Syria vis-à-vis the United States. Indeed, according to one analyst, Hizballah used its leverage over the hostage-takers to boost its post-conflict position in negotiations with Syria, which needed to secure the hostages' release to cement its newfound proximity to the Western alliance of the 1991 Gulf War.<sup>54</sup> But the prospect of having to present itself to the electorate as a political party dedicated to social justice and reform was another factor encouraging Hizballah to end the hostage crisis.<sup>55</sup>

Since the IDF withdrawal in 2000, the level of popular tolerance for Israeli retaliatory action has dropped markedly. In response, Hizballah has limited its actions largely to the Shebaa Farms area. It has cooperated with the Lebanese Army in preventing Palestinian groups from attacking Israel.<sup>56</sup> It has stuck closely to the established rules of engagement (at least concerning the Lebanese-Israeli border) and has calibrated its attacks so as not to provoke large-scale retaliations.<sup>57</sup> When a Hizballah leader was assassinated in Beirut, Hizballah's response was markedly muted.<sup>58</sup> Only once did hostilities escalate to pre-withdrawal levels of intensity—intriguingly not in retaliation for Israeli actions in Lebanon but in response to the IDF's March 2002 invasion of Palestinian towns and refugee camps in the West Bank. Even then Hizballah was careful not to escalate the hostilities beyond a localized border conflict. Syrian and Iranian pressure played a role in this. But so arguably did electoral calculations—a reading that is

tentatively supported by the fact that Hizballah began deescalating hostilities before the Iranian Foreign Minister's above-mentioned intervention.<sup>59</sup>

Hizballah has also begun to reinterpret the concept of resistance, subtly shifting the emphasis from military to social action. The annual "military reserve" training each Hizballah member must undergo appears to have become a vehicle for building esprit de corps and corporate identity as well as an attempt at keeping Hizballah's political and administrative personnel in military shape. The annual report of Jihad al-Binaa, Hizballah's construction company set up originally to repair the structural damage resulting from Israeli offensives, refers to farmers as "the well of resistance" and says the charity seeks to "boost the resistance of farmers . . . through guidance orientation and agricultural rehabilitation." Its focus, moreover, is overwhelmingly on building for the future, and a peaceful one at that.<sup>60</sup> Thus, even while maintaining a "resistance culture," Hizballah seems to be engaged in a process of redefining what "resistance" entails—although the continuing crisis in Israel/Palestine and the ongoing violence in Iraq has provided Hizballah with ample opportunity to revert to the original meaning of "resistance."

Partly because of the ongoing conflict in Israel/Palestine, partly as a result of the war in Iraq, there still appears to be sufficient popular support for maintaining a military wing—as long as it is not seen as provoking "unavoidable" Israeli retaliations. Active opposition to Hizballah's right to bear arms is typically confined to Lebanon's non-Shi'i communities and has not seriously affected Hizballah's electoral chances among the Shi'a—as Hizballah's gains in the 2004 municipal and 2005 national elections unambiguously show. Continuation of the resistance, moreover, has given Hizballah tangible benefits as it can capitalize on its status as the only Arab force to have successfully repelled the IDF. It has permitted Hizballah to maintain a high profile regionally and expand its influence inside the neighboring Palestinian territories, as the "godfather" of resistance against Israel. As long as Hizballah succeeds in limiting Israel's response, continuing its resistance efforts and rhetoric will only serve to remind its constituencies of Hizballah's victory over the IDF and so strengthen Hizballah's political appeal.

### Effect of Israeli Policies

One factor that has been pivotal in both the establishment of Hizballah and its subsequent popularity has been Israel's behavior. Hizballah's electoral gains cannot be understood without considering the impact of Israel's various offensives. To understand what impact Israel's actions have had on Hizballah, and why, more specifically, Israel's policies have not only failed to eradicate the movement but contributed to strengthening it, I will

briefly explore the rationale behind Israel's policies and the response they provoked.

Israel's goal was the eradication of Hizballah's military capacities through the destruction of its military infrastructure. Because Hizballah operated as a small-scale guerrilla force, its infrastructure was typically well hidden among the general population, confronting Israel with the dilemma of either limiting itself to acting reactively to guerrilla attacks to avoid civilian casualties or taking the battle to the guerrillas and incurring civilian casualties. The IDF decision to opt for the latter was in part motivated by the calculation that the general population would turn against Hizballah. Such an approach was inspired by the notion of "collective punishment" which Israel had deployed in various guises throughout its conflict with the Palestinians and which was based on the premise that the general population could not sustain the costs of a protracted offensive.<sup>61</sup> Israel's two major offensives in 1993 and 1996 were premised on the notion that the material destruction and mass displacement of civilians would alienate the population and force the Lebanese government to act decisively against Hizballah. The three minor offensives carried out between 1999 and 2000 in the lead-up to Israel's withdrawal were inspired by similar notions.<sup>62</sup>

One of the reasons the IDF adopted this policy was the success of the 1982 invasion in turning the general population against the PLO, destroying the PLO's infrastructure in South Lebanon and ousting the PLO from Lebanon.<sup>63</sup> What this comparison overlooks, however, is not only the fact that, far from eradicating resistance against Israel, the invasion triggered a new resistance force, but also that this resistance thrived every time the IDF attempted to eradicate it. Operation Grapes of Wrath illustrates this process well. It was launched in 1996 to destroy Hizballah's camps, arms caches, and rocket launching facilities, but not a single rocket launcher was destroyed and only 13 Hizballah fighters were killed in the fighting. Instead, the bombing killed at least 165 civilians, including 109 refugees sheltering inside the UN compound at Qana, while thousands of civilians were forced to flee to the capital.<sup>64</sup> Rather than weakening Hizballah, the offensive caused Christians who had previously been ambivalent about the resistance effort to donate money and encouraged Christians, Muslims, and politicians not previously supportive of Hizballah to join demonstrations against the occupation and help raise funds for the resistance.<sup>65</sup>

There are various reasons for the failure of the IDF's policy of collective punishment to eradicate Hizballah. Unlike the PLO, Hizballah could not be isolated from its support base. Despite the limited appeal of Hizballah's Iranian associations and ideology, its resistance aims resonated strongly with the general population, and its leaders were well connected to their local communities. Hizballah's investments in local welfare and, post-1992, its commitment to championing the interests of its electoral constituencies

ensured that Hizballah had enough popular credit to survive Israeli offensives.

Syria also played an important part in ensuring that the Lebanese government continued to back Hizballah, sometimes against its will. Israel believed, correctly, that there was a fundamental tension between Hizballah's resistance goals—liberation at any cost—and the Lebanese government's interests—economic recovery and the reassertion of sovereignty. However, it underestimated Syria's control over the Lebanese government and Hizballah's willingness to accept the state's sovereignty in all areas but resistance, thus allowing the government to save face.<sup>66</sup>

A third reason was the fact that Israeli offensives were typically disproportionate to Hizballah's initial resistance acts. Both the 1993 and 1996 offensives which killed around 150 each and displaced thousands were launched in response to Hizballah firing rockets into northern Israel, killing two people in 1993 and none in 1996.<sup>67</sup> In each case, the rockets had been Hizballah's response to Israeli attacks involving civilians outside the occupation zone—a breach of the rules of engagement agreement. Because the discrepancy between the initial act and the final response was so glaring, Hizballah had little difficulty in persuading the Lebanese public that fault for their suffering lay with the IDF.

A fourth reason was the high ratio of civilian to combatant casualties. The initial war of 1982–1985 left an estimated 19,000 dead, the majority civilians. The 1993 and 1996 offensives killed some 300 civilians between them, while each of the 231 recorded Israeli breaches of the rules of engagement between 1993 and 1996 typically resulted in civilian deaths. In most instances, few guerrilla fighters were killed. The high ratio of civilians to combatants killed was in part because of the nature of the conflict—a popular resistance movement against aerial bombardments. However, it was also a direct outcome of Israel's policy of collective punishment and its active pursuit of increasing the cost of conflict to the general population. Rather than isolating Hizballah, this policy led to an increase in general hatred of Israel and rendered Hizballah's rhetoric more resonant with the electorate.

A fifth factor was the belief that Israel lacked the political will to eradicate Hizballah. From the start, Israeli public opinion was divided regarding the right course of action in Lebanon. The IDF's phased withdrawal to the south in 1983–1985 was in part due to the unexpectedly bloody counteroffensive of the local Shi'a, in part due to contradictory views within successive Israeli governments (which in turn fueled the Shi'i offensive).<sup>68</sup> Having been forced to withdraw once, the IDF, and the Israeli public, were loath to reoccupy Lebanon beyond the southern buffer zone—limiting the IDF's options to aerial bombardments and covert infiltrations. This, and the fact that the occupation force only numbered 1,500 soldiers, reinforced the notion that Israel lacked the political will to eradicate Hizballah. Israel's

vacillation between major offensives and containment, and its willingness to agree to a set of rules of engagement, sent out a similar message—as did the increasing level of domestic protests. Hizballah played on these domestic differences and was strengthened by them in its resolve to resist.

A further factor was Israel's willingness to negotiate with the Lebanese government. Though the negotiations were ostensibly between two sovereign states, they revolved around ending hostilities between Hizballah and the IDF, effectively giving Hizballah an indirect presence at the negotiating table. Since Hizballah was juggling local, Syrian, and Iranian interests, it had limited room to maneuver and could not fully exploit its advantage. Nonetheless the organization's political profile was boosted and the notion that Israel lacked political stamina was reinforced. The various negotiations Israel has entered into via third parties over the release of hostages and soldiers' bodies have had similar results.<sup>69</sup>

That Israel was willing to negotiate and agree to a set of rules of engagement was partly because of the attainment of a limited balance of power between Hizballah and the IDF—or what one Hizballah leader called a “balance of horror.”<sup>70</sup> Within the occupation zone, and following a typical pattern of protracted conflict between unequal forces, Hizballah had succeeded in reducing the casualty ratio from 10:1 to between 1: 2.7 and 1:1 by the late 1990s.<sup>71</sup> Because Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon was increasingly contested domestically, the rising number of Israeli casualties hurt the Israeli government particularly hard while boosting the resistance's morale. By the late 1990s, Hizballah had also perfected the art of psychological warfare. It filmed successful assaults and broadcast them in Hebrew into Israel via its satellite station, al-Manar. It carried out a number of targeted assassinations against high-ranking Israeli officers and their Lebanese allies, and ambushed a covert IDF operation on Lebanese territory, showing that it had managed to infiltrate Israeli intelligence.<sup>72</sup> To soldiers who were already ambivalent about their presence in Lebanon, this type of psychological offensive was deeply demoralizing.

Outside the occupation zone, Hizballah attempted to provide a deterrent to Israel's aerial bombardments by expanding its arsenal of surface-to-surface rockets. Though the damage caused was typically material rather than involving human casualties, the terror factor was of some importance in restraining Israeli offensives.<sup>73</sup> Both the 1993 and 1996 offensives culminated in negotiations aimed at persuading Hizballah to stop firing rockets into northern Israel while the absence of any major Israeli offensive since 1996 can in part be ascribed to an increase in Hizballah's rocket arsenal, now rumored to stand at 7,500–10,000. Hizballah's ability to neutralize an Israeli listening post on the Golan Heights in retaliation for the IDF's targeting Syrian installations inside Lebanon was another instance of this new balance of power.<sup>74</sup>

Of particular significance was the belief among Israeli intelligence ana-

lysts that Hizballah had acquired rockets with a range of 120 miles, which, if true, would have increased Hizballah's firing range tenfold—bringing major Israeli cities such as Haifa within range. It is disputable whether Hizballah has acquired control over such rockets, or whether these rockets would be effective in causing serious harm given their lack of controllability. But the fact that it is possible that Hizballah might hit Israeli cities means that the IDF must take into account that an offensive might be met with an extended counteroffensive. The fact that Sharon, rumored to have considered using the Iraq war to deal Hizballah a decisive blow, did not carry out any such plans is a possible illustration of this new reality.<sup>75</sup>

Finally, although collective punishment has been counterproductive as a means of eradicating Hizballah, it has arguably been one of the factors deterring Hizballah from escalating the conflict. However, it would not have been as effective in doing so if Hizballah had not become partially dependent on maintaining popular support by having entered the political system. Furthermore, if the policy of collective punishment had not been adopted and Israel had withdrawn earlier, it is debatable whether Israel would have needed such a policy in the first place to deter Hizballah, as the organization's support base would arguably have been significantly less militant.

Israel's attempts at negotiating an end to its two major offensives of the 1990s would also have been less successful if Hizballah had not become part of the political system in Lebanon. Because Hizballah had a vested interest in the system, the Lebanese government had leverage over Hizballah, however limited, which it would have otherwise lacked. Moreover, because Hizballah's relationship with its supporters was now regulated by an electoral dynamic, Hizballah had an increased incentive to prevent the conflict with Israel from turning into a protracted war, thus making it more agreeable to accept a negotiated mutual containment policy.

## Effects of 9/11 and the War on Terror

The events of 9/11 and the subsequent "global war on terror" have affected Hizballah in various and conflicting ways. On the one hand, 9/11 has renewed the West's fascination with the question of whether Hizballah is a terrorist organization. Allegations concerning Hizballah's alleged cooperation with al-Qaeda abound, placing Hizballah in an internationally precarious position. It has responded to this accusation with typical self-confidence, mounting a series of operations against the IDF in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 as if to underline that its leaders believed theirs to be a just cause carried out with legitimate means, and that they would do as they saw fit, regardless of the world's views. To date, besides the U.S. and Israel, only Canada among Western states has placed Hizballah in its entirety on its list of proscribed "terrorist organizations" (as opposed to

listing only Hizballah's so-called "External Organization"). The EU has so far refused to bow to U.S. pressure—allowing EU politicians and diplomats to keep channels of communication open with Hizballah. Because so few states have responded to pressure from the U.S. and Israel, and because Hizballah has been listed as a terrorist organization by the U.S. for some two decades already, the placing of Hizballah on the U.S.'s post-9/11 list has not had a significant impact. However, this situation could change if the EU—which has signed a Neighborhood Agreement with Syria and Lebanon and is seriously involved in Lebanon's postwar reconstruction—succumbed to pressure to blacklist Hizballah. The fact that the European Parliament has already called on the EU to blacklist Hizballah in its entirety may be significant in this respect.<sup>76</sup>

The war on terror, and particularly the U.S. invasion of Iraq, has affected both Syria and Iran, which in turn has had an effect on Hizballah. Hizballah's two main state sponsors are well aware of the fact that they are next on the list of potential targets of the U.S. administration. However, Hizballah is so integral to both their foreign policies that it would take more than the mere possibility of a threat to significantly affect their support. Developments in Lebanon following the February 2005 assassination of former prime minister Rafiq Hariri and Syria's subsequent withdrawal may affect Syria's long-term commitment to Hizballah but so far Syrian support has remained unwavering.

The war on terror has opened up new opportunities. Though Syria and Iran need to tread more carefully, both regimes appear determined to fully exploit the possibilities opened up by the U.S. difficulties in Iraq. Iran is well aware that the U.S. recognizes Iran's potential for undermining the U.S. efforts at rebuilding Iraq by stirring up the majority Shi'i population. Syria has a similarly pivotal kingmaker role through its influence over the Sunni minority and the remnants of the Ba'th party. The fact that Iran continues to refuse to bow to international pressure regarding its nuclear program suggests that the Iranian regime is, until now, not taking the threat of U.S. intervention seriously. The election of hard-liner Mahmood Ahmadinejad to the presidency is only likely to strengthen Iranian resolve. The Syrian regime is in a weaker situation because of the precariousness of President Bashar Assad's position. The fact that Syria has succumbed to international and local pressure to withdraw from Lebanon is indicative of this weakness. But Syria too has shown few signs of allowing this to affect its support for Hizballah—as evidenced by its decision to allow Hizballah to oppose Amal in the 2004 municipal elections, thereby sending the message that Hizballah is not only an organization with a grassroots mandate but also would be a much stronger force were it not for Syria's curbing hand.<sup>77</sup>

Hizballah itself has similarly been strengthened by the opportunities offered by the war in Iraq. The overwhelming presence of Hizballah flags

at various Shi'i demonstrations at the start of the occupation indicated how many Iraqi Shi'a look to Hizballah as the role model of a successful Shi'i political-cum-militia party. Little is known for certain concerning the extent of Hizballah's actual involvement in Iraq. In Lebanese terms, whether the organization is directly involved in Iraq is of relatively little direct relevance. What counts is the fact that Hizballah can increase its support base by championing the downtrodden Shi'a of Iraq and rhetorically linking the latter's plight to the plight of the Palestinians and the plight of the Lebanese Shi'a before May 2000.<sup>78</sup> The fact that Hizballah succeeded in attracting 250,000 people—or 1 in every 8 Lebanese—to declare their readiness to die as martyrs during a demonstration denouncing the U.S. invasion of Iraq, only vindicates this observation.<sup>79</sup>

The events of 9/11 have also served to reinforce the regional position Hizballah has gained as a result of its success in ousting the IDF from Lebanon and its subsequent role as the “godfather” of the al-Aqsa Intifada in Palestine. Before the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hizballah was engaged in a heated debate about the future of the resistance, one wing arguing that Hizballah's future lay in politics, the other insisting that the struggle against Israel and Western hegemony should remain Hizballah's core task.<sup>80</sup> With the outbreak of the Intifada, the wind was taken out of the sails of the politically oriented wing. The U.S. response to 9/11 has made the position of this wing even more untenable, while offering the pro-resistance party unprecedented opportunities to capitalize on Hizballah's regional standing as the only Arab force capable of repelling Israel (and by implication, U.S. forces in the region).

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

A number of tentative conclusions can be drawn. Hizballah's case suggests that incorporation into the electoral process can under certain circumstances have a moderating effect on an insurgent group. The group in question must be sufficiently embedded and representative of a section of the population to envisage an electoral future for itself. Its leadership, decision-making structures and ideology must be able to support the notion of compromise. If the leadership is responsive to popular opinion, and popular opinion favors a moderate course, this facilitates both the process of incorporation and the process of moderation. Whether incorporation is likely to occur and lead to moderation is in part dependent on the composition of the movement. In Hizballah's case, the increase in highly educated and upwardly mobile supporters appears to be positively correlated to the movement's incorporation and relative shift toward moderation—despite the fact that recent research on political violence suggests that an increase in education and wealth is positively correlated to an increase in support for political violence.<sup>81</sup>



Some democratization theorists, most famously Seymour Martin Lipset, have long argued that an increase in per capita income facilitates the process of democratization. If democratic peace theory has any validity, this means that an increase in per capita income is likely to lead to a reduction in support for violence.<sup>82</sup> The relationship between socioeconomic status, democratization, and support for violence is far more complex than these theories suggest.<sup>83</sup> However, Hizballah's case still appears to indicate that, under conditions of electoral competition and a functioning political system in which the insurgent organization has a political stake, an increase in the overall socioeconomic condition of that organization's support base is positively correlated to moderation in the organization's conduct.

A further necessary condition appears to be a sufficiently strong central government—or external force backing up the government—to enforce compliance. Of particular importance is the relative balance of power between the insurgents and the government. If either is too weak, there is little incentive for either party to compromise. Instead a level of stalemate is necessary. This conclusion is echoed by Dankwart Rustow's classic theory of democratic transition which stipulates that for democratization to occur a stalemate must exist between at least two contending forces, typically an elite and an emerging counter-elite.<sup>84</sup> It is also echoed by Dietrich Rueschemeyer and colleagues' structural theory of democratization which contends that democratization is the product of the emergence of a "balance of class power" between state and landed elites on the one hand, and a coalition of working and middle classes on the other.<sup>85</sup> Hizballah is precisely such a coalition and thus, if Rueschemeyer is correct, a "natural" force for democratization (regardless of its views on democratization).

A second lesson lies in the observation that, in Hizballah's case, the policy of collective punishment served to consolidate rather than eradicate the movement—echoing the findings of this book's chapters on Hamas (Chapter 4), the Kashmiri insurgents (Chapter 7), and the IRA (Chapter 6). In the cases of Hamas and Hizballah, the organizations in question are socially deeply embedded, and consequently reflect the socioeconomic composition as well as the aspirations of a significant section of society. In both instances, insurgent violence was preceded by state violence in the form of invasion and occupation, creating a shared set of grievances among the larger population. Under such conditions, collective punishment, with its twin characteristics of being disproportionate to the original offense (to deter future offenses) and targeting innocent bystanders, reinforces the original grievances and grants legitimacy to the insurgents' rhetoric and methods, playing into the insurgents' hand. While it may help to deter escalatory attacks, it appears to do this only if the insurgents incur a significant political cost from escalating the conflict—in Hizballah's case, by being part of the electoral system. The benefits of deterrence, though, do

not necessarily outweigh the costs of increased popular legitimacy for the insurgents, and increased popular support for militant practices.

The level of an organization's embeddedness appears to play an important determining role. The more embedded an insurgent movement, arguably the more difficult it is to eradicate it by military means alone—particularly if those means are limited to aerial bombardments and covert operations. If the state were prepared to use all coercive means at its disposal without regard for human rights, it might be able to suppress an insurgent organization through brute force alone, as President Assad of Syria did in 1982 in Hama, killing 10,000–30,000. For a democracy, total disregard for human rights is neither desirable nor electorally feasible. But even Assad's ruthless suppression was accompanied with socioeconomic and political strategies to weaken popular support for the insurgents and bind citizens to the state.<sup>86</sup>

When a movement is embedded, its aspirations are to a certain extent a reflection of the aspirations of a section of the population. Although an insurgent movement can manipulate its constituency's aspirations, it can only do so to a limited extent. Hizballah's particular evolution suggests that an embedded organization such as Hizballah must heed the views of its supporters if it is to retain its influence. The construction of grievances is a two-way process between the organization's ideologues and its supporters—particularly so if the organization in question operates in a competitive electoral system where support can be both gained and lost, and competition is conducted by nonviolent means. If an organization such as Hizballah reflects, even to a limited extent, the genuine views of a significant section of the population, its goals and grievances cannot be ignored if an end to violence is desired. While it is impossible for Israel to meet Hizballah's demand that it dismantle itself, Israel can meet Hizballah's calls for its withdrawal from the disputed border areas, and for an end to violations of Lebanese airspace. Such a response is likely to decrease popular support for radical solutions which will increase the pressure on Hizballah to adapt its rhetoric and practice if it is to maintain its popular backing.

That such a move is unlikely to result in Hizballah increasing its demands (as those opposing accommodation might argue) can be inferred from the fact that Hizballah, despite its continuing call for the liberation of Jerusalem, has only laid claim to border areas whose legal status is ambiguous. The Lebanese population are not interested in suffering for the liberation of Palestine, denying Hizballah the popular support needed to expand the conflict (although they may attempt to continue to covertly support Palestinian resistance groups). Once Israel has met Hizballah's demands concerning Lebanon, domestic and international pressure on Hizballah to rein in the resistance is likely to increase dramatically—especially if, in the absence of fear of Israeli reprisals, Lebanon's economy were to recover. If such a move were to be accompanied by a negotiated

settlement stipulating Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights, Syria's support for maintaining an autonomous resistance force would similarly weaken. Syria's withdrawal and the resurgence of a vocal antiresistance movement inside Lebanon has made such a scenario more likely—even though Hizballah's success in the 2005 national elections (winning 11 seats by itself and 35 in coalition with Amal) has enabled Hizballah to claim a popular mandate for continued resistance. The fact that Hizballah leaders have begun, for the first time, to express willingness to discuss the future of the resistance is a possible indicator of things to come.<sup>87</sup>

A third observation concerns the importance of not viewing Hizballah as a rigid, eternally hostile, unchangeable organization. Such an approach is inspired by both the "terrorism paradigm" that Western leaders too often adopt, and by the more essentialist writings on Islamism or political Islam. The evolution charted above suggests that an embedded organization like Hizballah can be responsive to external pressures and capable of change and compromise. Adoption of a paradigm that assumes ideological rigidity is likely to affect state policies negatively. In the case of Israel, the policy of collective punishment was arguably sustained by a view—derived from Israel's contemporary understanding of the PLO—that saw Hizballah as immutable, bent on the total destruction of Israel and thus in need of eradication. Such a view ignores the fact that Hizballah needs a level of popular support to be successful and that popular support for eradicating Israel, if this incurs personal costs, is largely lacking. Conversely, adoption of a paradigm that acknowledges that Hizballah is an ideologically mutable organization facilitates a state response which seeks to understand the factors shaping Hizballah's behavior and attempts to change these to transform the situation, and with it, the organization, into one that sustains peace, or at least a permanent ceasefire. Such an approach would focus among other things on ensuring a general increase in economic and educational opportunities, and a political future for the moderates among the insurgents in question.

Labeling an organization like Hizballah "terrorist" unnecessarily complicates reaching a resolution. As long as Hizballah is publicly discredited as a "terrorist organization," Israel must resort to indirect and contorted negotiations that both limit the chances of a successful resolution and bestow the very legitimacy on Hizballah that Israel's policy of branding it as "terrorist" is seeking to avoid. Conversely, if Israel (and the U.S.) were to drop its policy of labeling Hizballah "terrorist" and propose negotiations that included Hizballah, pressure on the latter to accept the invitation would increase dramatically and allow Israel to take the moral high ground.

Finally, the case of Hizballah contains particularly compelling lessons for the case of Hamas. Hamas, like Hizballah, is a movement composed of an upwardly mobile counter-elite, an increasingly heterodox constituency,

with similar goals and a comparable position within the community's political hierarchy (though Palestine lacks Lebanon's multisectionalism). That Hamas's behavior has not become more moderate in response to its political inclusion in the Palestinian system is to a large extent a function of the fact that its inclusion was only partial; that until recently a political future for Hamas was not seriously envisaged by either the Palestinian Authority or the peace process's international sponsors; and that the general population had not experienced a significant peace dividend, either in economic terms or in personal security. As a result, and in particular because Hamas's post-conflict prospects are uncertain while public opinion has until recently supported the practice of suicide bombing, the incentive to become more accommodating has not been as great as has been the case with Hizballah. The case of Hizballah suggests that if Israel were to cease its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza (and in particular its hated occupation practices); allow the Palestinian economy to grow; and encourage the Palestinian Authority to secure a post-conflict political future for Hamas, then Hamas might be socialized into becoming more moderate as a result of its constituency becoming more accommodating.

## Glossary

al-Aqsa Intifada: Palestinian uprising of September 2000 until the present.

Amal: Hizballah's chief rival among the Shi'i parties, established in the 1970s by Musa Sadr, subsequently led by Nabih Berri, and a partner to the ruling coalition since the 1980s.

Bekaa Valley: Lebanon's furthestmost valley to the east, bordering Syria and populated largely by Shi'a; one of Hizballah's heartlands.

Da'wa Party: transnational Shi'i Islamist movement calling for the establishment of an Islamic state, founded in Iraq but with a local branch in Lebanon

Golan Heights: Syrian land bordering Lebanon, occupied by Israel during the Six Day War of 1967.

Hizballah: literally "Party of God," referring to a passage in the Qur'an which predicts that the party of God will be victorious.

*hijab*: headscarf.

IDF: Israeli Defense Forces.

Islamism: the ideology of those seeking to establish an Islamic state and society based on Islamic law and principles.

Jihad al-Binaa: literally "reconstruction jihad (effort)," Hizballah's network of agricultural, construction and engineering services, initially established to repair structural damage caused by Israeli offensives.

Levant: the area of the Middle East bordering on the Mediterranean, encompassing Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Jordan.

Maronite: refers to the largest Christian denomination in Lebanon; the National Pact allocated the presidency to the Maronites.

Movement of the Disinherited: Shi'i revival movement, established by Imam Musa Sadr in the 1970s to address the socioeconomic marginalization of Lebanon's Shi'a.

Multinational Force: coalition of U.S., French and Italian forces initially dispatched

to Lebanon to oversee the withdrawal of the PLO from Lebanon; following the Sabra and Chatila massacres, the MNF returned and became embroiled in the Lebanese civil war.

Operation Accountability: July 1993 Israeli air offensive aimed at curbing Hizballah; more than 130 civilians were killed, 600 wounded, 200,000–300,000 displaced.

Operation Grapes of Wrath: April 1996 Israeli air offensive aimed at curbing Hizballah; 165 were killed (mostly civilians), 300–400 wounded, an estimated 500,000 displaced.

PLO: Palestine Liberation Organization, umbrella organization of secular Palestinian nationalist movements.

Shi'a (adjective: Shi'i): minority denomination within Islam, originating in the dispute over the Prophet's succession in the seventh century C.E.; the Shi'a form the largest denomination in Lebanon; the National Pact granted them the post of House Speaker

Sunni: the majority denomination within Islam; the Sunnis were allocated the Premiership by the National Pact

*wilayat al-faqih*: rule of the supreme jurisprudent (Ayatollah Khomeini's blueprint for an Islamic state in Iran)

## Timeline

1920: France is granted mandate over Lebanon and Syria by League of Nations, following collapse of Ottoman Empire.

1943: Lebanon is declared independent; National Pact establishes division of power between Maronites, Sunnis, and Shi'a.

1959: Imam Musa Sadr arrives in Lebanon.

1966: Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah arrives in Lebanon, which becomes a center for Shi'i activism.

1970: PLO establishes headquarters in Lebanon, having been ousted from Jordan.

1970s: Lebanese branch of (Iraqi) Da'wa Party is established by activists close to Fadlallah, following the steady expulsion of Lebanese clerical students from Najaf, Iraq.

1974: Movement of the Disinherited is established by Imam Musa Sadr.

1975: Civil war breaks out in Lebanon; Amal is established by Imam Musa Sadr.

1978: Israel invades Lebanon to curb PLO; Imam Sadr disappears in Libya.

1979: Shah is toppled in Iran; Ayatollah Khomeini establishes the Islamic Republic of Iran, providing political inspiration for Lebanese Shi'a.

1982: Israel invades Lebanon, forces PLO out to Tunisia, occupies southern Lebanon and Beirut; Iranian Revolutionary Guards arrive in Lebanon; foundations of Hizballah are established; Multinational Forces arrive; first suicide operation is carried out against IDF headquarters in Tyre.

1983: Suicide operations are carried out against U.S. Embassy, U.S. Marines, and French paratroopers; first Western hostages are taken by activists close to Hizballah; Multinational Forces leave.

1984: Further suicide operations are conducted against IDF headquarters in Tyre and Sidon.

1985: IDF completes withdrawal to self-declared "buffer zone" in the south; Hizballah publishes its "Open Letter"; suicide operations gradually stop.

1986: Hizballah establishes Majlis al-Shura (consultative council).

1987: Subhi al-Tufayli emerges as Hizballah's first secretary-general.

- 1988: Height of Amal-Hizballah clashes; end of Iran-Iraq war marks end to dream of Iraq becoming second Islamic republic.
- 1989: Ta'if Agreement signed by major Lebanese factions, signaling beginning of the end of the civil war; Hizballah initially condemns the agreement as an undemocratic elite pact; Ayatollah Khomeini, supreme head of the (Iranian) Islamic revolution to which Hizballah subscribes, dies; Hizballah undergoes restructuring.
- 1991: Secretary-General Subhi al-Tufayli deselected in favor of more pragmatic Abbas al-Musawi; hostage crisis begins to come to an end.
- 1992: Secretary-General Abbas al-Musawi assassinated by the IDF; Hassan Nasrallah elected as Hizballah's third secretary-general; Israeli Embassy in Argentina bombed, killing 32, wounding 252, allegedly in retaliation for Musawi's assassination (available evidence remains speculative, pointing if anything to Iran rather than Hizballah); final hostages released; Hizballah participates in the first post-war national elections and wins 8 out of 27 Shi'i seats (plus 4 allied seats out of a total of 128).
- 1993: Israeli air offensive Operation Accountability kills over 130 civilians, wounds 600, displaces 200,000–300,000; Hizballah and Israel agree upon "rules of engagement."
- 1994: Suicide car bomb kills 96, wounds 127 at the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association headquarters in Argentina; Hizballah blamed though available evidence remains speculative.
- 1996: Israeli air offensive Operation Grapes of Wrath kills 165 (mostly civilians), wounds 300–400, displaces an estimated 500,000; Hizballah wins 7 seats (plus 3 allied seats) in national elections.
- 1998: Hizballah participates successfully in first postwar municipal elections.
- 2000: Israel withdraws from Lebanon leaving only a few disputed border areas; Hizballah wins 9 seats (plus 2 allied seats) in national elections; outbreak of al-Aqsa Intifada in Palestine enables Hizballah to continue playing the resistance card.
- 2002: Worst flare-up of cross-border violence since 2000 erupts in response to the IDF invading Palestinian towns and refugee camps.
- 2004: Hizballah stages a 250,000-strong march protesting the invasion of Iraq.
- 2005: Rafik al-Hariri, former Lebanese prime minister, assassinated; calls for Syrian withdrawal intensify, domestically and internationally; Hizballah organizes a pro-Syria demonstration involving an estimated 400,000 demonstrators; Syrian forces withdraw; Hizballah wins 11 seats (plus 3 allied seats) in the national elections, Amal-Hizballah coalition wins 35 seats.