

God and Hope: Shia Islam and the Lebanese Civil War

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In recent decades, the Middle East has had a near-constant presence in Western newspaper headlines due to its seemingly endless supply of conflicts. Wars over land, religion, and political ideology have become unfortunate staples of the area, and it seems as if no month can pass without reports of terror attacks. The Lebanese militant group Hizballah gained notoriety in the context of this tense setting, thrusting itself onto front pages when it fought a brief war with Israel in 2006. A similar group in Lebanon named the Amal Movement receives far less attention, although it shares Hizballah's Shia Muslim constituency and backing by Syria. However, these seemingly uniting factors have bitterly divided the groups in the past during Lebanon's turbulent Civil War that lasted from 1975-1990. While the "awakening" of this traditionally destitute and fragmented sect into a collective political consciousness began as a grassroots populist movement, I will argue that the Shia Muslims of Lebanon only became the premier force in their country by acting in the external interests of Syria and Iran during the Lebanese Civil War. The visual iconography of both Amal and Hizballah along with official statements of Shia leaders shows how these factions embraced a pan-Arab or pan-Islamic ideology that reflected their foreign patrons.

For a relatively small Middle Eastern country, Lebanon has received significant attention from historians. However, most general works on Lebanon's history give little attention to its Shia population. In Kamal S. Salibi's *Crossroads to Civil War: Lebanon 1958-1976* and Edgar O'Ballance's *Civil War in Lebanon: 1975-92*, which together provide an excellent examination of the Lebanese Civil War, the nation's Christian and Palestinian population receive the most

attention.¹ William Harris' book *Faces of Lebanon* similarly gives Christians the most attention, despite being a social examination of each sect in Lebanon.² Most recently written articles on Lebanon's religious identities favor a more political perspective, such as Farid El Khazen's 2003 article *Political Parties in Postwar Lebanon: Parties in Search of Partisans* and T. P. Najem's article *Palestinian-Israeli Conflict and South Lebanon*.³ All social groups are unmentioned in these articles, and Amal and Hizballah are mentioned only as Shia political parties.

The Shia of Lebanon receive the most attention from the plethora of works dedicated to the study of Hizballah. Books such as Hala Jaber's *Hezbollah: Born With a Vengeance* and Judith Palmer Harik's *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* spend some time explaining Hizballah's formation in the context of Shia Islam, but were written to focus on Hizballah's military activities.⁴ Magnus Ranstorp's book *Hizb'allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis* gives some insight into the Shia, but details Hizballah's terrorist activities to the extent that it reads like a case study on Western hostage-taking.⁵ Others have focused more on Hizballah's political activities, such as Graham Usher's article *Hizballah, Syria, and the Lebanese Elections*.⁶ While these works mention the Amal Movement and Hizballah's foreign links, they mainly focus on their participation in Lebanon's Parliament.

¹ Kamal S. Salibi, *Crossroads to Civil War: Lebanon 1958-1976*. (Delmar, NY: Caravan, 1976), Egdar O'Ballance, *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-9* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998)

² William Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars, and Global Extensions*. (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996)

³ T. P. Najem, "Palestinian-Israeli Conflict and South Lebanon." *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no.46 (2000): 4006-4009, Farid El Khazen, "Political Parties in Postwar Lebanon: Parties in Search of Partisans." *Middle East Journal* 57, no. 4 (2003): 605-624

⁴ Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*. (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2004)

⁵ Magnus Ranstorp, *Hizb'allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997)

⁶ Graham Usher, "Hizballah, Syria, and the Lebanese Elections," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26, no. 2 (1997): 59-67, Eitan Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God from Revolution to Institutionalization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

Finding detailed works that focus on Lebanon's entire Shia community is difficult with so many written about just Hizballah, yet some authors focus on this group and the lesser-known Amal Movement relatively equally. Marius Deeb's article *Shia Movements in Lebanon: Their Formation, Ideology, Social Basis, and Links with Iran and Syria* thoroughly examine the background and ideologies of Amal and Hizballah before highlighting their external links.⁷ However, this report does not discuss the Civil War actions of these groups, and is limited by its publication in 1988 before the War ended. Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr takes a similar approach in her 2008 book *Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities*, which traces the Shia community of Lebanon from the early 20th century to Hezbollah's 2006 war with Israel, yet the book lacks any sort of historical narrative and favors social case studies instead.⁸

It is even rarer than historians focus on Amal more than Hizballah, as Augustus Richard Norton did twice with his article *Changing Actors and Leadership Among the Shiites of Lebanon* and his book *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*.⁹ The former article briefly follows the social standing of the Shia and details the foundation of Amal, but since Hizballah had just become an official party during 1985 when the article was published, it receives only a brief mention at the end. Likewise, his book *Amal and the Shi'a* published two years later mentions Hezbollah much more, but unfortunately quickly transforms from a social history to a political examination of parties.

BACKGROUND

⁷Marius Deeb, "Shia Movements in Lebanon: Their Formation, Ideology, Social Basis, and Links with Iran and Syria," *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1988): 683-698.

⁸Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008)

⁹Augustus Richard Norton, "Changing Actors and Leadership Among the Shiites of Lebanon." *American Academy of Political and Social Science* 482, (1985): 109-121; *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987)

Although Israel is currently the most atypical Middle Eastern nation as it is the sole state without a Muslim majority in the region, Lebanon would have received a similar distinction several decades ago for possessing a Christian majority. Currently, Lebanon is arguably the most religiously diverse Middle Eastern nation as it contains a 56% Muslim majority relatively evenly split between Sunni and Shia, a sizeable 39% Christian population, and a 5% Druze population, which is an offshoot of Islam exclusive to the region.¹⁰ However, these statistics are not entirely reliable, as Lebanon has not held an official census since 1932 when the nation possessed a slight Christian majority and was still a French colony. Since this time, each sect has greatly feared the loss in power and status that could come from an official count. This sensitivity surrounding the nation's religious demographics would foreshadow its future conflicts based on the national religious diversity.

Lebanon's multi-sectarian character must be understood to exist in a nation where religious differences are institutionalized and made part of the political system in what is known as "confessionalism." When Lebanon gained independence from France in 1943, an unwritten agreement called the "National Pact" outlined its new system of government using the statistics of the 1932 Census as a basis. This Pact favored the slight Christian majority by reserving a 6:5 Christian to Muslim ratio in Lebanon's Parliament and reserved the position of President for a Christian, Prime Minister for a Sunni, and Speaker of Parliament for a Shia, which is a tradition that holds to this day.¹¹ While Lebanon's demographics shifted over the decades as Muslims grew to outnumber Christians, the National Pact's provisions did not change accordingly and frustrations gradually mounted.

¹⁰ Estimate from U.S. Department of State, "Lebanon- International Religious Freedom Report 2008," U.S. Department of State <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108487.htm>>

¹¹ US Army 1st Special Operations Command, "Special Psychological Operations Study: The Lebanese Hizballah, an Ideological Profile." 8th *Psychological Operations Battalion* (May 1990), 8.

Aside from internal tension, Lebanon has existed in a volatile region of external tension that greatly intensified with the creation of Israel in 1948. The creation of this state displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, most of whom fled to the neighboring Arab State of Jordan, with others fleeing to Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt. Sunni militant Palestinian refugees in all of these territories began establishing bases inside other countries from which to stage guerilla attacks. Most of these guerilla fighters would eventually become part of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), an umbrella organization of Palestinian militias that had the established goal of “the ultimate liberation of their homeland” and would be led by Yasser Arafat.¹² PLO fighters using Jordan as a staging ground for attacks angered Jordan’s King Hussein, as severe Israeli reprisal attacks took place within his nation’s borders, killed Jordanian civilians, and occasionally pulled his forces into conflict. Fed up with the PLO’s “state within a state,” King Hussein’s army violently drove the PLO out of Jordan beginning in September of 1970 in a conflict called “Black September.” This conflict ended in the autumn of 1971 with the PLO totally expelled from Jordan, but hardly out of the picture. The PLO saw the weakness and divisions inside of Lebanon, and found a new home for its guerilla attack staging grounds.¹³

The PLO had been using South Lebanon as a staging ground for attacks against Israel several years prior to Black September, causing the PLO to be a highly divisive issue in Lebanon. They were welcomed by most of Lebanon’s Sunni Muslims, Druze, and ideological leftists, but most Christians and Shia Muslims did not want another PLO “state within a state” like Jordan and feared Israeli reprisal attacks or the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon. The three major Christian parties of Lebanon formed a “Triple Alliance” not only out the national

¹² Salibi, 25.

¹³ Salibi, 25, 32-34

security concern of the PLO's activities, but also out of fear that the PLO could limit the traditional Christian power in favor of Muslims and radical parties.¹⁴

The Triple Alliance began seeing both of its fears become real as Israel began launching retaliatory attacks inside of the Lebanese border for PLO raids in 1968 and the growing acceptance that Muslims outnumbered Christians by this time. Clashes between the PLO and the Lebanese Army that was desperate to maintain control throughout the country became more frequent, and Lebanese Muslims, leftists, and pan-Arab Nationalists decried these crackdowns. However, when the Lebanese Army ceased to enforce any sort of restrictions on the PLO due to political pressure, a Christian militia called the Phalange began taking measures into its own hands and clashed with the PLO. With the mostly-Christian commanded Lebanese Army and Christian sub-state militias routinely clashing with the Muslim PLO and its supporters, tension ran at an all-time high in Lebanon from 1970-1975.¹⁵

On April 13, 1975, all of this tension exploded when a skirmish between Palestinian and Phalangist gunmen erupted into nationwide the following day, and each side began staking out turf and setting up roadblocks. Radical and Nationalist Lebanese Muslim sided with the PLO with their own militias at the ready. Christian parties followed suit, forming their own militias and assisting the Phalange. Beirut quickly became divided between Christian East Beirut and Muslim West Beirut, with a no-man's land called the Green Line dividing the center.¹⁶ While periodic cease-fires occurred for short durations, the built-up frustration with the Confessionalist political system and sporadic retaliatory clashes ensured that the embers of the conflict never were out for too long.

¹⁴ Ibid, 34-37.

¹⁵ Salibi, 40-45.

¹⁶ O'Ballance, 1-5

In a functioning state, security forces and political negotiations could have isolated the PLO-Christian clashes before they spread. However, Lebanon's weak army and divided political institutions prevented the State from stopping this Civil War. The Government, which consisted of pro-Palestinian Muslims and anti-Palestinian Christians, perennially failed to reach an agreement on how to deal with the PLO. Each political party feared a loss of power, and established militias to defend their respective interests as political dialogue failed. The Lebanese Army, traditionally commanded by Christians and segregated into different units by sect, rapidly fractured, with soldiers joining their sect's respective militias.¹⁷

Although the Lebanese Civil War began in a relatively predictable manner with Christian militias (eventually called the Lebanese Front) fighting Palestinian, Druze, and leftist militias (eventually called the Lebanese National Movement), this period would only last for two years. In June 1976, Syria officially intervened at the request of Christian President Franjeh to combat the PLO and the Lebanese National Movement militias.¹⁸ By the end of 1976, the Syrian intervention led to an Arab League summit believed at the time to be an end to two years of Civil War.¹⁹ Unfortunately, this was only the first stage of the War, and hostilities hardly faded during the one year lull in fighting.

In 1978, PLO attacks from South Lebanon would bring Israel into the conflict, which resulted in the creation of a buffer zone complete with its own Israeli client militia, the Christian South Lebanon Army, along Lebanon's Southern border. By the end of this year, the new Lebanese Forces Party designed to represent all Christian militias repeatedly engaged the Syrian Army it had previously brought in for assistance. The "Christian versus Muslim" generalization of the War's first stage would be disproven by copious sectarian infighting by the War's end.

¹⁷ US Army 1st Special Operations Command, "Special Psychological Operations Study," 8.

¹⁸ O'Ballance, 49-52

¹⁹ Salibi, viii

Suicide bombings, kidnappings, assassinations of politicians, and massacres perpetrated by every side continued throughout the 1980's, until the Lebanese Parliament met in Taif, Saudi Arabia, in 1989 to negotiate the conflict's end. While the Taif Agreement gave Muslims greater political representation in acknowledgement of their majority in Lebanon, it did not do away with the Confessionalist system at all. Additionally, Shia militia Hizballah would refuse to disarm, as the Shia had emerged as the dominant power by the end of this conflict.²⁰

THE SHIA OF LEBANON

An examination of Lebanese Shias before the Civil War shows the improbability of this change in social status.

When the 1932 Census was taken, the Shia were Lebanon's third largest religious community, following the Maronite Catholic (a Christian sect originating in Lebanon) and Sunni Muslim communities. This disadvantage meant the Shia would not only trail in numbers, but also political representation in Lebanon's confessionalist system. Shia Muslims, allotted the relatively weak position of Speaker of Parliament, carried little political weight and were paid almost no attention by the other sects. The Shia also lacked a political party that identified with the particular interests of their sect, unlike the Maronite Phalange Party. The Maronites and Sunnis were firmly in control of Lebanon's political system, bureaucracy, and military leadership, even as demographic shifts caused the Shia to replace Maronites as Lebanon's largest sect.²¹ By the 1960's, Shias would be over 30% of the Lebanese population, but would only be assigned 20% of Parliament seats.²² These figures demonstrate the inflexibility of the confessional system that triggered the War, yet the Shia remained in no position to lead a rebellion.

²⁰ Najem, 4006.

²¹ US Army 1st Special Operations Command, "Special Psychological Operations Study," 7.

²² Norton, *Changing Actors*, 109-111.

The initial population of the Shia alone does not explain their dearth of political power, as this sect participated in a glorified feudal system that hindered any economic development and created a social image of a backwards class. Shia Muslims were the poorest sect, and were the least likely to receive an education or any benefit from government services. While some Shia lived in the slums of Beirut's Southern suburbs, the majority lived in South Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley (Northeast Lebanon on the Syrian Border) where they existed as an agricultural-based class that relied on subsistence farming and sharecropping.²³ These peasants rarely came into contact with the Lebanese Government, and instead of a public authority, traditional patronage-based landowners called *zaims* dominated these Shia communities from the time of the Ottoman Empire well into the 1960's. These *zaims* ran Shia areas in the style of a political machine and faced almost no opposition during their reign, unlike in Iran and Iraq where Shia clerics frequently protested the decisions of secular authorities. This is due to Lebanese Shia clerics lacking an independent financial base and being dependent upon the *zaims* for support, while the clerics of Iran and Iraq had a system of religious trusts to generate their own income.²⁴ Despite population growth, the Shia would remain a political and economic underclass due to this dated system and were unprepared for the rapid changes that would occur in Lebanon during the second half of the 20th century.

A wave of modernization would hit Lebanon during the 1950's, and each sect, including the Shia, would benefit from improvements in education, transportation and media technology. The Shia became less isolated due to these changes, and greater work opportunities in Beirut would draw many into the capital's southern slums. The displacement of the PLO from Jordan into South Lebanon following Black September in 1970 would drive further numbers of the Shia

²³ Shaery-Eisenlohr, 23.

²⁴ Norton, *Changing Actors*, 109-111.

towards Beirut, as their guerilla attacks on Israel and the subsequent devastating reprisals created an unstable security situation and economic depression. While this migration lessened the power of *zaims* in the south, South Beirut remained a slum as there were too few jobs for the newly arrived Shia.²⁵ With high unemployment in South Beirut and continuing economic backwardness in the South and Bekaa Valley, the Shia were eager to listen to a voice that would lift them out of their desolate situation.

That voice would come from an Iranian-born cleric named Musa al-Sadr.

Although Iranian by birth, al-Sadr was of Lebanese heritage with his family originating in the same Southern areas he would eventually grow to lead. By age 31, he became the *mufti* (religious judge) of Tyre, the only mostly Shia major city in Lebanon. The cleric knew the social issues facing the Shia, yet he did not lash out at those who fared better and preached religious tolerance. In his view, the Shia were underprivileged and oppressed due to the neglect of the Lebanese Government, and wanted to unite the Shia as one force. He saw a “oneness of God” and hailed Lebanon as an example of “inter-communal toleration,” praising its dialogue, harmony, and freedom.²⁶ While he sought change, he did not see violence as a means to this end, which allowed him to balance alliances with the warring Maronites and PLO. In his view, neither political sectarianism nor a completely secular state would work in Lebanon, and a partially religious “establishment of the state of believers” rooted in the simple belief in God would unite the Christians and Muslims.²⁷ His attention to the needs of a social class that had long been neglected and desire for change without violence or intolerance allowed the Shia cleric to gain broad and rapidly-expanding appeal.

²⁵ US Army 1st Special Operations Command, “Special Psychological Operations Study,” 14.

²⁶ Norton, *Changing Actors*, 109-111.

²⁷ Shaery-Eisenlohr, 26.

Musa al-Sadr recognized the traditional patronage system and the wealth of the few powerful *zaims* as a major obstacle to Shia social progress. He saw this system as inflexible with its inherited leadership unwilling to accept “new blood” and called the system “the yoke of feudalism.” He further criticized the *zaims* for inheriting Lebanon’s political leadership, and told of how a system of “political feudalism” had emerged as well.²⁸ Indeed, the most powerful *zaim* was a man named Kamil al-Assad, who became the speaker of parliament in the late 1960’s and whose family had governed South Lebanon for generations. Al-Sadr sought to limit the control of the al-Assad clan over the Shia, and began his campaign by allying himself with rival Shia clans.²⁹ A rivalry began to emerge between al-Sadr and al-Assad, with the former utilizing political and communal participation to siphon power away from the *zaim*. With the traditional feudal system weaker, the Shia would be able to better organize into an actual community that could gain greater recognition from the Lebanese Government.

From 1960 to 1975, al-Sadr proved to be an extremely charismatic figure among the Shia, and used his appeal to rally the Shia into a greater political consciousness. In the mid-1960’s several different political parties were competing for the Shia, as there was no single organization or party that dominated Shia politics. They were primarily drawn to leftist and secular parties, and formed the base of the Lebanese Communist Party.³⁰ In 1969, Musa al-Sadr convinced parliament to establish a state institution called “The Supreme Shia Council” formed to bring together Shia politicians, professionals, clerics, and scholars. This council also separated Shia legal affairs from the Sunni judicial system, and put the two sects on equal footing for the first time. Musa al-Sadr became its first president, and his power matched al-

²⁸ “1974 Charter of the Amal Movement,” translated by Barbara Parmenter and reprinted in Norton, *Amal and the Shia*, 158

²⁹ Deeb, 683-684.

³⁰ Norton, *Changing Actors*, 113.

Assad's power as speaker of parliament.³¹ A 1977 working paper issued from this organization, along with a group named "The Rally of Shia Personalities," declared the importance of the Shia in Lebanese society while avoiding any sectarian divides. It stated that the Shia community was committed to "renew its faith in a unified Lebanon" and believed Lebanon to be "sovereign, free, and independent." Politically, it called for an extension on the Speaker of Parliament's term from one to four years and sought for all of Lebanon to be counted as a single constituency. This would reduce the power of the *zaims*, who depended on regional and local support, and would bolster the power of Musa al-Sadr. These reforms were endorsed by all of the Shia leadership and were not considered radical nor militant amid the then-burgeoning Civil War climate.³² This is not to say that Shia militancy did not exist at this time however, as al-Sadr himself would be the one to carve out the niche for a Shia militia in the conflict.

When the PLO's arrival in South Lebanon after Black September created a deteriorating security situation in this heavily Shia area, al-Sadr found it difficult for his Supreme Shia council to promote any reforms. Lebanon was quickly becoming dominated by militias, and the Lebanese Army rapidly lost the ability to protect its own citizens. This frustrated the cleric, who began speaking more and more of taking up arms as a necessity. In March 1974, he spoke at a rally of his supporters, most of whom were armed, and condemned the Government for failing its people's basic needs. Al-Sadr would form a mass social justice movement at this rally called "The Movement of the Deprived" to meet the security and social needs of the poorer Shia until the Government could adequately provide them. The following year this Movement would form a militant wing to deal with the onset of the Civil War.³³ This militant wing would be called

³¹ Harris, 73.

³² Deeb, 684-685.

³³ Norton, *Amal and the Shia*, 46-48.

Amal, which is the Arabic word for “hope,” yet more insidiously is really the Arabic acronym for *Afwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniya*, or the Lebanese Resistance Detachments.

Amal’s founding charter reflects the reformist and religious nature of its founder, Musa al-Sadr. Its first principle tells of the Movement’s belief in God, of God’s presence in daily interactions, and how belief in man’s freedom, dignity, and mobility is connected to God. Its second principle details the legacy of Arab civilization throughout time, such as its contributions to science and mathematics, and its commitment to this legacy. This principle mentions some Shia heroes, yet also recalls the struggle of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad to show its openness to other religions and sects. The third principle discusses human rights and freedoms, including the freedom of thought, religion, and association, and mentions “conditional economic freedom,” which must be restricted by laws that preserve the rights of people as a collective. This principle begins to take on a revolutionary tone however, as it encourages a rebellion against corruption and “the rejection of worldly idols to find true freedom in the worship of God.” The charter also includes “the duty to combat political feudalism,” showing its dedication to al-Sadr’s goal of weakening the traditional Shia *zaims*. Further evidence of this objective can be seen in the charter’s anti-sectarian rhetoric, as it calls for the abolition of political sectarianism despite the Movement’s founding by a Shia cleric. Although *Amal* was ideologically more religious than the traditional landowners, al-Sadr felt the “political feudalists” had exploited sectarianism into serving their own interests at every opportunity at the expense of national unity.³⁴

Aside from its religious and social justice ideals, the charter also begins to espouse nationalist and pan-Arab sentiments in its fifth and sixth principles. These principles stress Lebanon’s sovereignty, and reject any form of external colonialism or imperialism ruling over

³⁴ “1974 Charter of the Amal Movement,” translated by Barbara Parmenter and reprinted in Norton, *Amal and the Shia*, 147-159.

the country. This anti-imperialist tone becomes intensified when the cause of Arab liberation is mentioned, and Amal's anti-Israeli mission is stated. Amal sees Israel, called the "Zionist Entity" in the charter, as an "imperialist presence in the Arab World," and calls for it to be disbanded. The charter ends by claiming the Amal movement is not sectarian, partisan, or discriminatory between citizens and shuns sectarian fanaticism.³⁵ These themes of pan-Arabism, religious moderation, and seeing Israel as an imperialist presence are very similar to the ideals of former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser (ruled 1956-1970), and Nasserist thought would play a prominent role in the leftist Lebanese National Movement.

Although it seems out of character for a cleric that preached nonviolence to form an armed militia, this decision can be understood in the context of Al-Sadr's goals and the climate of conflict in South Lebanon. Al-Sadr still sought to reduce the power of traditional landowners, and the existence of Amal can be seen as an alternative means to this end by expanding al-Sadr and the Shia clergy's power. Another reason comes from his belief that Amal was important to fight Israeli incursions into South Lebanon, as fighting between Yasser Arafat's PLO guerrillas, who initially trained Amal, and Israeli forces often unwillingly pulled the Shia into the conflict. In Al-Sadr's own words, he formed Amal because it:

"responded to the call of the wounded homeland...in days when Israeli assaults on southern Lebanon reached their peak while authorities were not performing their duty in defending the homeland and the citizens."³⁶

Arguably, this "self-defense" justification for forming an armed wing could have been used by most of the militias in Lebanon at the time, making Amal differ little from them during its initial years.

³⁵ Ibid, 161-166

³⁶ Maasri, Zeina. *Off the Wall: Political Posters of the Lebanese Civil War*. (New York: U.B. Tauris & Co., 2009), 65.

It would be inaccurate to call Musa al-Sadr a truly “militant” leader however, as forming and commanding a militia was not his primary objective. When War broke out in 1975, al-Sadr and Amal were initially allied with the Lebanese National Movement, or the coalition of the PLO and left-wing Muslim groups, yet Amal played a minor role and could hardly be counted among the more powerful militias in this coalition. However, al-Sadr broke this alliance when Syria intervened the following year to assist the Christian Lebanese Front. Prior to the Syrian intervention, Lebanese President Suleiman Franjeh accepted a “Constitutional Document,” which proposed a plan to restoring peace in Lebanon and placated al-Sadr as a way to execute political reform.³⁷ Al-Sadr was also a close friend of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad, who belonged to a minority sect of Shia Islam called the Alawis.³⁸ While al-Sadr and the Lebanese National Movement had a shared interest of greater Muslim representation, the cleric sought to preserve rather than destroy the Lebanese State. He potentially feared the more radical and polarized Lebanon that would result from a leftist-Muslim victory where diplomatic reforms would be impossible to pass.

Amal would remain politically and militarily weak from 1976-1978, as al-Sadr did not want his militia to overshadow his efforts in creating a social protest movement. He wanted to be seen as a figure that utilized state institutions for reform, or one “working within the system,” and wanted Amal to be seen as such.³⁹ Although “Amal” initially applied to the military wing of the Movement of the Deprived, eventually both wings would be merged into the “Amal Movement.” Shia diplomatic forums still existed, as the Supreme Shia Council remained distinctly different from the Amal Movement. While the latter represented a “bottom-up” grassroots movement, the former was an official state institution. By 1978 however, it appeared

³⁷ Norton, *Amal and the Shia*, 48.

³⁸ Norton, *Changing Actors*, 114.

³⁹ Deeb, 685-686.

as if the Amal Movement was rapidly losing ground to Civil War turbulence, and al-Sadr's populist appeal to aid the Shia was fading.⁴⁰ Israel invaded South Lebanon in March of 1978 in what it called "Operation Litani" (named after the Litani River in South Lebanon) to confront the PLO guerrillas, but this invasion was short-lived due to pressure from the Carter Administration and the upcoming Camp David Accords. This invasion however did lead to the deployment of UN forces in South Lebanon and an Israel established a "security zone" just north of the Lebanon-Israeli border controlled by its own Christian proxy militia, the South Lebanon Army. This attack took a heavy toll on the Shia, who began resenting both the PLO and Israeli presence in the South.⁴¹ If the Shia cleric was to gain recognition for his sect, it seemed as if he would have to greatly expand the Amal Movement's militant activities.

Before Amal could make any of these changes however, Musa al-Sadr disappeared when visiting Libya in August 1978.⁴² His fate remains unknown.

Al-Sadr's disappearance caused him to instantly become a charismatic figure for the Shia community to rally around regardless of their political divisions. Many saw him as the embodiment of the "vanished imam" legend in Shia Islam, which holds that the 12th Imam (religious and political successor to the Prophet Muhammad) who vanished around 874 C.E. will return at the end of time to judge the Earth.⁴³ Posters of al-Sadr immediately appeared in many Shia neighborhoods, and in a 1978 poster printed by Amal, he is depicted as calm and benevolent, appearing almost as if he were a deity.⁴⁴ He has since remained an extremely popular figure in these areas, and arguably became more prominent after his disappearance than before.

⁴⁰ Norton, *Amal and the Shia*, 48.

⁴¹ US Army 1st Special Operations Command, "Special Psychological Operations Study," 15.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Norton, *Changing Actors*, 114.

⁴⁴ Anonymous Artist, 1978 Amal poster reprinted in Maasri (Poster 2.19), 65.

Amal would experience a rebirth after al-Sadr's disappearance, as this incident incited the Shia further into militancy and Amal became a much more formidable militia. Hussein al-Husseini took over the Movement in 1978, and largely continued al-Sadr's policies that favored Syira and diplomatic participation in the Shia community.⁴⁵ However, he resigned by 1980 not wanting to turn Amal into another competing militia. Husseini did not disappear from political life through, as he became Speaker of Parliament in 1984 following al-Sadr's rival *zaim*, Kamil al-Assad.⁴⁶ Al-Husseini's successor in Amal, Nabih Berri, would mark the Movement's transformation from a social movement that hardly took part in any fighting into a movement where militancy outweighed politics.

Nabih Berri, who is Lebanon's current Speaker of Parliament, took over Amal on April 4, 1980. While he had a middle-class upbringing and was French-educated, he lacked connections to the ruling class of Lebanon. When he entered politics in May 1984 as a cabinet minister, it was his leadership of Amal that granted him access to this scene and would continue to be what he was known for best.⁴⁷ Berri recognized al-Sadr's charisma, and tried to draw connections between himself and the former Amal leader. A 1980 Amal poster contains a photograph of Berri standing with al-Sadr, and is captioned "holder of trust to bearer of trust" to represent the passing of the Shia leadership.⁴⁸ Berri was more of a political centrist and a secular figure than al-Sadr, but he still pursued the cleric's goals of national preservation and reform, including the eventual elimination of the Confessionalist system. When he became Amal's leader, the Movement continued to remain friendly with the Supreme Shia Council until 1983, when the Council broke ties with Amal. It denounced Berri's Movement solely as a militia, and claimed

⁴⁵ Deeb 685-686.

⁴⁶ Norton, *Amal and the Shia*, 91-93.

⁴⁷ Deeb, 685-686.

⁴⁸ Anonymous Artist, 1980 Amal poster reprinted in Maasri (Poster 2.20), 66.

the Council to be the main communal leadership body of the Shia, which split Shia moderates for political ambition.⁴⁹

Nabih Berri also began Amal's connection to what became its greatest benefactor- Syria. Like al-Sadr, Berri was also a friend of Hafez al-Assad in Syria, yet al-Sadr was much more independent from Syria than Berri. As a Shia Alawi, President al-Assad regarded the Shia of Lebanon as sympathetic to his regime in Syria, where the Sunni majority regularly challenged his rule. He believed Lebanon's Shia would have a shared political outlook, and therefore Amal was deemed the most likely to carry out Syria's will in Lebanon. He began involving himself in the affairs of the Lebanese Shia, and was largely responsible for Berri's rise to power inside Amal and the Shia community.⁵⁰ When Syria intervened in Lebanon in 1976 to combat the Lebanese National Movement and the PLO, Amal followed Syria and turned against its former allies and trainers. Syrian-Palestinian relations improved as both found common enemies after the Egyptian peace treaty with Israel in 1978 and the Christian rebellion against Syrian occupation. However, a Sunni Islamist uprising in Syria that began in 1979 and was supported by the PLO ensured President Assad would not remain Arafat's ally for long.⁵¹ Reflecting this, Amal mostly fought the PLO from 1979-1982, as it had the self-defense of its South Lebanon homeland that the Palestinians had dragged into brutal confrontations with Israel in mind. This anti-PLO struggle may seem somewhat unlikely with Amal's Arab Nationalist philosophy, yet the Shia believed the PLO had vastly "overstayed its welcome," and confronting them won Amal new Shia recruits, the favor of Syria, and even early favor from Israel.⁵²

⁴⁹ Norton, *Changing Actors*, 118.

⁵⁰ Deeb, 686-688.

⁵¹ Harris, 171-172.

⁵² Norton, *Amal and the Shia*, 50-51.

While Syria remained in a position of power over the Shia community through Amal, another state would soon emerge to challenge this hegemony and to divide the Shia: The Islamic Republic of Iran.

In February 1979, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini overthrew Iran's Pahlavi Dynasty and established a Shia Islamic Republic in what became the Iranian or Islamic Revolution. The establishment of a Shia state, albeit not an Arab one (Iranians are mostly ethnic Persians), greatly inspired Lebanon's Shia and caused them to feel as if they had a new international identity. Lebanese Shia began revering Ayatollah Khomeini, much like Musa al-Sadr, and some began to contemplating turning Lebanon into an Islamic Republic in the Iranian model. Iran's Revolution made Lebanon's Shia believe that a return to basic Islamic principles would solve everything from foreign interference, governmental tyranny, and economic decline to civil unrest and increased materialism. Some Shia began believing that a secular nationalist party such as Amal was doomed to fail, as it would only promote sectarian conflict among Muslims.⁵³ The majority of Shia remained moderates however, not wanting to replicate Iran's Islamic Republic inside of the multi-confessional Lebanon. Although disagreements emerged among the Shia inside of the Amal Movement regarding the establishment of an Islamic state, it would take external forces to drive these pro-Iranian Shia into leaving Amal.

While the Iranian Revolution began an ideological rift among the Shia, the greatest catalyst for a divide between radicals and moderates occurred when the Israeli Army invaded Lebanon in 1982 in what was called "Operation Peace for Galilee." Israel planned to drive the PLO completely out of Lebanon in this operation, as their "state within a state" continued to carry out guerrilla attacks on Israel from South Lebanon. The Shia were especially affected by this invasion, as Israel encompassed Shia-heavy areas by invading the entire Southern portion of

⁵³ US Army 1st Special Operations Command, "Special Psychological Operations Study," 8.

the country up to Beirut.⁵⁴ Lebanese President Elias Sarkis formed “The Committee of National Salvation” as a makeshift government in the midst of this invasion, and Nabih Berri would serve on this Committee. This U.S.-sponsored committee brokered a May 1983 Accord between Israel and Lebanon, which permitted the Israeli Army to conduct patrols with the Lebanese Army within South Lebanon and allowed its proxy militia, the South Lebanon Army, to continue its control of the Southern security zone. The Shia believed this Accord to be a way to secure Israeli dominance in their country, and radicals saw Berri as having made an unforgivable error.⁵⁵

Amal was also weakened by a politically and geographically fragmented leadership. Amal leader Nabih Berri was based in Beirut, but local Amal leaders such as Dawud Dawud based in Tyre, South Lebanon governed their region relatively independently. Its moderate clerics also had much less influence over the Shia than Musa al-Sadr.⁵⁶ This weak leadership, combined with the Iranian Revolution and the Israeli invasion, would drive some radicals to form their own organizations. Hussein al-Musawi, Amal’s official spokesman, left the Movement in 1982 and accused its leadership of collaboration with the Israeli invasion. He subsequently formed a radical organization called “Islamic Amal” in the Bekaa Valley, which sought to create an Islamic Republic in Lebanon and received Iranian aid.⁵⁷ Most significantly however, another radical organization would form consisting of a loose coalition of Shia Islamists calling themselves the “Party of God,” or *Hizballah* in Arabic.

Hizballah’s origins can be traced back to 1982 when it was secretly formed as a shadowy organization dedicated to fighting Israel. When the Israeli invasion began in June of this year,

⁵⁴ Norton, *Changing Actors*, 118.

⁵⁵ US Army 1st Special Operations Command, “Special Psychological Operations Study,” 15.

⁵⁶ Deeb 686-689.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 694.

several leading Shia clerics of Lebanon were attending an annual Shia Islamic conference in Tehran. When news of the invasion reached the conference, two clerics, Sheikh Suhbi Tufeili and Sheikh Ragheb Harb conceived the idea an Iranian-modeled militia to combat the Israeli invasion.⁵⁸ By November 1982, a young man named Ahmed Kassir drove an explosive-laden truck into an Israeli Army building in Tyre, South Lebanon, which killed around 100 soldiers. This event was commemorated in a 1984 Hizballah poster, proclaiming Kassir as “the pioneer of martyrdom operations” and the attack as Hizballah’s own, making it seem as if Hizballah had operatives in 1982.⁵⁹ A prominent Shia cleric named Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah became the leading political and religious figure for Shia radicals, and he was alleged to be Hizballah’s spiritual leader. Others allege he formed a terrorist group called the Islamic Jihad Organization in 1983, although he denied being the leader of any party or movement.⁶⁰ A U.S. Army profile placed Hizballah’s formation in 1983, calling it “an umbrella organization for Lebanon’s Shia fundamentalist groups,” and alleged Fadlallah to be its mentor.⁶¹ In 1983, Hizballah, still largely underground, had only around 300 fighters and was lead by a confederation of radical clerics that preached Islamism, or political Islam, as the solution to Lebanon’s problems.⁶² In 1984, Hizballah became a more solidified group when it was inaugurated on the Second Anniversary of the Sabra and Shatilla Massacre. This Massacre saw the death of at least several hundred Palestinian civilians at the hands of the Christian Phalange militia, who received indirect assistance from Israel.

⁵⁸ Jaber, 47-48.

⁵⁹ Anonymous Artist, 1984 Islamic Resistance/Hizballah poster reprinted in Maasri (Poster 4.27), 94.

⁶⁰ Norton, *Changing Actors*, 119.

⁶¹ US Army 1st Special Operations Command, “Special Psychological Operations Study”

⁶² Al-Watan Al-Arabi Interview with Hassan Nasrallah from 11 September 1992, reprinted in Nicholas Noe (ed.), *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*. (New York: Verso, 2007), 95.

Hizballah was not officially declared until 1985, when it created a charter proclaiming itself as an “Islamic Resistance” movement committed to the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon. Many alleged Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah to be the leader of Hizballah upon its declaration, but he continued to profess that he was only an influential Shia cleric and not any party’s leader. This has led to conclusions that he is the group’s “spiritual leader” with his public statements rooted in Iranian ideology outweighing any official position.⁶³ It would be Sheikh Subhi Tufaili that was regarded as Hizballah’s first official leader, having helped conceive the group from its beginning.⁶⁴ Hizballah, like Ayatollah Khomeini, forbade compromises with the U.S. and Israel, seeing these two powers as forming an evil alliance. It declared itself committed to the “liberation of Palestine,” which in this case refers to all of Israel and the Palestinian Territories.⁶⁵ In a 1986 interview, Hizballah’s secretary-general since 1992 Hassan Nasrallah stated that Israel “was established for the express purpose of partitioning the Muslim World,” and that Hizballah sought to unify the global Islamic community as a whole. He then states that Lebanon is part of this Islamic community, rejecting the partition of the Muslim World into separate nations, but Hizballah would not impose Islam on the Lebanese people.⁶⁶ This seemingly contradictory notion reflects Hizballah’s Shia Islamist idealism having to cope with the reality of Lebanon’s religious diversity.

Hizballah’s leadership largely consisted of influential Shia clerics and former Amal members. Ibrahim al-Amin represented Amal in Iran before becoming Hizballah’s official spokesman. Hussein al-Musawi, Islamic Amal’s leader, found his group and Hizballah shared a

⁶³ US Army 1st Special Operations Command, “Special Psychological Operations Study”

⁶⁴ Jaber, 47.

⁶⁵ Usher, 62.

⁶⁶ Al Khaleej Interview with Hassan Nasrallah from 11 March 1986 reprinted in Noe, 32.

common message, and Islamic Amal was absorbed into the new organization.⁶⁷ The image of Musa al-Sadr, Amal's founder and previous leader, was used in Hizballah's propaganda to further its agenda and to gain support from former Amal members. One such poster depicts al-Sadr's and Ayatollah Khomeini's portraits next to quote from Khomeini – "Musa al-Sadr was like a son to me"- over the silhouettes of Hizballah fighters and a quote from al-Sadr- "we have to from a culture of war and employ all resources in our battle with Israel."⁶⁸ Another poster simply shows al-Sadr's portrait and is captioned with his quote "Israel is an absolute evil."⁶⁹ While Amal's posters depicted the cleric as benevolent and watching over his followers, Hizballah's posters emphasized his anti-Israeli rhetoric and Iranian heritage. Hassan Nasrallah himself was a former member of Amal, and in a 1986 interview admitted Amal had "considerable political appeal." He acknowledged that differences in "vision, work, and other elements" existed within the Movement, but they remained minor until the Israeli invasion of 1982. Regarding the radical and moderate split, he thought that the more religious Amal members (himself included) saw, "that a revolutionary and Islamist current should be established to adequately confront the new challenge facing Lebanon."⁷⁰ Hizballah soon became Amal's main rival within the Shia community, and its siphoning of Amal's support greatly benefitted Iran.

Since Hizballah's goal was the pursuit of an Islamic State in Lebanon on the Iranian model, it should come as no surprise that Hizballah enjoys close political and ideological ties to Iran. Its charter acknowledged its links to Iran's Islamic Revolution, and espoused Ayatollah

⁶⁷ Deeb, 694.

⁶⁸ Anonymous Artist, c.1985 Hizballah poster reprinted in Maasri (Poster 2.22), 66.

⁶⁹ Muhammad Isamil, 1985 Hizballah poster reprinted in Maasri (Poster 2.21), 66.

⁷⁰ Al Khaleej Interview with Hassan Nasrallah from 11 March 1986 reprinted in Noe, 26.

Khomeini's *wilayat al-faqih* (Guardianship of the Jurisprudent) ideology.⁷¹ The first tenet of this charter decries foreign imperialism, and quotes Khomeini by stating:

"the original objective of the imperialist countries is to destroy the Holy Quran and to obliterate it, and to destroy Islam and the Muslim ulema (scholars)...and their plan is to keep [Islamic countries] backward, and in the name of encouraging education...they have suppressed Islamic schools."⁷²

This tenet also rejects the notion of East and West, only accepting complete political, economic, and legislative unity for Muslims. This was a pivotal part of Khomeini's reasoning to form an Islamic State. Hizballah also disagreed with Arab supremacy in Islam, and believed conflicts between Arabs against non-Arabs to be divisive of the Islamic community. Politically, Hizballah was run by a twelve member council, and if this council failed to reach an agreement or a unanimous vote it appealed directly to Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran.⁷³ Hassan Nasrallah, then a rising official Hizballah, himself stated in a 1986 interview that his group was based on the "principles and political line of Imam al-Khomeini," and that Lebanese Shia following Khomeini's ideology "is how Hizballah came to be."⁷⁴ While Amal's charter reflects the pan-Arab character of the Movement, Hizballah's charter reflects its pan-Islamic desires that it shares with Iran.

Hizballah's ideological ties to Iran were not limited to its charter and political processes however, as its propaganda and political posters from the War echo this connection as well. Hizballah frequently utilized Iranian iconography and imagery with slight modifications so that they may be placed into a Lebanese context. The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem became a recurring symbol of the pan-Islamic struggle against Israel in Iran, and two Iranian posters from

⁷¹ El Khazen, 611.

⁷² Deeb, 695.

⁷³ Ibid, 692.

⁷⁴ Al Khaleej Interview with Hassan Nasrallah from 11 March 1986 reprinted in Noe, 26.

the 1980's depict violent imagery surrounding this site to represent this struggle.⁷⁵ A Hizballah artist took one of these Iranian posters, and added pictures of the group's war dead over the Dome of the Rock with the caption, "a constellation of martyrs of the Islamic Resistance in the Western Bekaa."⁷⁶ Similarly, a 1984 poster made by Hizballah honors "Muslim Women's Day," and depicts women wearing *chadors* (full-length black cloaks worn mostly by Iranian women) in a rally on the right side of the poster with the Dome of the Rock on the left. The image of the women on the right was taken from an Iranian poster for the same holiday, while the Dome of the Rock was added by Lebanese artists. One of the women in the poster carries a quote from Musa al-Sadr- "collaboration with Israel is forbidden by God-" yet this replaced a quote from Khomeini in the original poster. Other posters used the image of a red tulip, used in the Iranian Revolution as a sign of martyrdom, to commemorate Hizballah's martyrs.⁷⁷ Even Hizballah's flag, depicting an arm clutching an AK-47 rifle is passed upon the logo of Iran's Revolutionary Guards.⁷⁸ With such strong ideological ties between Hizballah and Iran, both in its institutions and its propaganda, it is no surprise that Iran had a tangible role in assisting Hizballah as well.

In June 1982, around 1000 Iranian Revolutionary Guards arrived in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley to fight the Israeli invasion on the orders of Ayatollah Khomeini. These Revolutionary Guards assisted in Hizballah's formation, and by the time it officially formed in 1985 the Bekaa Valley would contain its strongest support due to Iranian indoctrination. The largely Shia Bekaa Valley shares a long border with Syria, and these Revolutionary Guards arrived in Lebanon with Syria's blessing. Syria and Iran had a military alliance at the time, as both opposed Saddam Hussein's Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War, and with tens of thousands of Syrian troops occupying

⁷⁵ Hussein Khosrojerdi, Abdulfazl Ali, Early 1980's Islamic Republic of Iran posters reprinted in Maasri (Posters 1.29, 1.30), 50.

⁷⁶ Anonymous Artist, c. 1985 Hizballah poster reprinted in Maasri (Poster 1.31), 50

⁷⁷ Merhi Merhi, 1986 Hizballah poster reprinted in Maasri, (Poster 4.36), 99.

⁷⁸ Maasri, 49.

Lebanon, Iran arguably also sought to have some influence in the conflict.⁷⁹ With much of Ayatollah Khomeini's rhetoric surrounding the need to fight Israel, an Iranian influence in an Arab nation would allow the Islamic Republic to directly influence the Arab-Israeli conflict. Syria had previously blocked any Iranian attempts to become involved in Lebanon, yet Syria changed its stance following the Israeli invasion. Syrian troops were fighting the Maronite militias in the 1980's, and with Israel eager to place a pro-Israel Maronite regime in Beirut at the time, it had reason to fear isolation if the Israelis succeeded.⁸⁰ Although, Nasrallah described Hizballah as "a self-propelled movement" that was "the will and decision of the Lebanese people who were inspired by Khomeini's ideology," it clearly received more than inspiration from Iran.⁸¹ Hizballah would continue receiving funding, arms, and training from Iran throughout the War. Although the fighting between the Christian and Muslim militias in Lebanon is commonly characterized as a Civil War, the degree of foreign involvement in this conflict complicates this idea. Additional nations would become involved in this War before it was over, including the United States.

Israel's 1982 invasion succeeded in driving the vast majority of the PLO from Lebanon, and a multi-national force (MNF) including the U.S., U.K., Italy and France was dispatched to oversee its withdrawal in August 1982. The MNF, although officially peacekeepers tasked with supporting the Lebanese Government, wound up supporting an Army and Presidency hated by Lebanese Muslims as the leader of the Christian Phalangist militia Amin Geymael was President at this time. The MNF would pay for its implicit support, and on April 18, 1983, the American Embassy in Beirut was severely damaged by a suicide truck bomb, killing 63. Tragedy would strike again only six months later when a truck bomb killed 241 U.S. Marines at their barracks

⁷⁹ US Army 1st Special Operations Command, "Special Psychological Operations Study," 9.

⁸⁰ Usher, 62.

⁸¹ Al-Watan Al-Arabi Interview with Hassan Nasrallah from 11 September 1992, reprinted in Noe, 96.

and a second bomb killed 28 French paratroopers. The MNF would withdraw early the following year.⁸²

Lebanon's radical Shia were blamed for these attacks, as they possessed several potential motivations. Prior to the attacks, France and Israel with the backing of the U.S. launched airstrikes against militant Shia in Hizballah's stronghold of the Bekaa Valley. The U.S. Navy also supported the Christian-dominated Lebanese Army against Muslim militias in September 1983.⁸³ U.S. support for pre-Revolution Iran and Israel was also a likely factor, as was its alleged support for Israel-allied Maronite factions in the War. Islamic Amal was implicated for some of the anti-American attacks, yet the Islamic Jihad Organization would be the one to claim responsibility for these terrorist bombings. Many believed Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, Hizballah's alleged leader in the 1980's, to be the leader of the Islamic Jihad Organization at the time, as his religious messages inspired opposition to the U.S. While Fadlallah admitted his anti-American preaching, he denied Islamic Jihad Organization links.⁸⁴ The Islamic Jihad Organization received moral and material support from Iran, leading many to claim Iran responsible for planning the attacks. It was an incredibly shadowy organization, as membership lists or any other way of identifying members did not exist.⁸⁵ Although it is still unknown who exactly carried out these attacks, it is widely accepted to have been Shia militants aided by Iran, and many believe the Islamic Jihad Organization to have been absorbed into Hizballah upon its creation. A U.S. Army profile of Hizballah believed Hizballah was loosely coordinated for "tactical, rather than strategic differences," and operated in "cells" to prevent association.⁸⁶ One

⁸² Jaber, 75-78.

⁸³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Terrorist Threat to Western Interests in Lebanon," Memorandum to CIA Director, 30 November 1983.

⁸⁴ Norton, *Changing Actors*, 119.

⁸⁵ Norton, *Changing Actors*, 118.

⁸⁶ US Army 1st Special Operations Command, "Special Psychological Operations Study"

thing that is definite is that the Shia of Lebanon caught the attention of the global community with these attacks.

A CIA brief from November 1983 blamed the emerging radical Shia organizations for these anti-American attacks, but knew they received significant external aid. It expressed concern that there was “increased cooperation among individual Shia extremist groups...and indications [redacted] that Syria may be stepping up its support for radical Shia leaders involved in terrorist activities.” Syria is named as a terrorist sponsor more than once in this brief, which is believable with its ties to Lebanon’s Shia population. Expectedly, Iran joins Syria in this distinction, as the document states “Iran will continue to encourage and provide aid to these groups for the commission of acts of terrorism, particularly against U.S. and French targets.” It believed Iran would act through Lebanese surrogate forces to mask its involvement in attacks, although it also feared the Iranian Revolutionary Guards in the Bekaa Valley could commit terrorist attacks as well. The Shia also received distinction for being particularly “prepared-even anxious- to sacrifice themselves as martyrs in terrorist operations” according to the brief.⁸⁷ The U.S.’ previously-existing quarrels with Syria and Iran therefore played a significant role in these attacks, and dragged the Shia into the conflict as proxies.

While Israel’s 1982 invasion had succeed in largely removing the PLO from Lebanon, radical Shia opposition would force Israel to withdraw from Lebanon in January 1985, leaving only a small number of troops and its proxy militia, the South Lebanon Army, in the Southern security zone. Hizballah’s suicide bombings against Israel in Lebanon proved to be a significant catalyst for the withdrawal, and in 1992 Nasrallah boasted that the Palestinian Intifada would not have been possible without Hizballah’s war of attrition.⁸⁸ Hizballah was not content with

⁸⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, “Terrorist Threat to Western Interests in Lebanon.”

⁸⁸ Al-Watan Al-Arabi Interview with Hassan Nasrallah from 11 September 1992, reprinted in Noe, 95.

Israel's partial retreat however, and wanted all Israeli troops out of Lebanon and the security zone dismantled. It became the leader of the anti-Israeli campaign following the withdrawal, as ninety percent of all armed actions against Israel in Lebanon since 1984 were carried out by Hizballah.⁸⁹ Iranian representatives had met with Shia clergymen and militants in the Bekaa Valley in August 1986, and they all "rejected" both the Israeli and UN peacekeeper presence in South Lebanon, speaking on behalf of Ayatollah Khomeini. They believed the UN resolution permitting peacekeepers in the South was unacceptable as it had recognized Israel (the "Zionist Entity"), and rising tension between Hizballah and the 5,800 UN peacekeepers occasionally erupted into armed clashes.⁹⁰ Iran used Hizballah not only as its proxy militia against Israel, but also a way to confront those it saw as "protectors" of Israel.

Many of Hizballah's propaganda posters dealt with the anti-Israeli conflict, such as one commemorating a pan-Islamic holiday to protest Israeli control of Jerusalem called "Quds Day" started by Ayatollah Khomeini. The poster depicts 2 Islamist fighters, a cleric, and a chador-clad woman marching towards a Dome of the Rock surrounded by a concrete Star-Of-David. It is captioned with Ayatollah Khomeini's quote "Every Muslim has to prepare himself to confront Israel and Jerusalem will ultimately return to Muslims," again showing the connection to Iran.⁹¹ Hizballah's goal to eliminate the Israeli presence from all Lebanese territory was very popular among the Shia, and even the moderate Amal Movement that had previously fought the PLO would join them in this cause.

While both Israel and the PLO occupied South Lebanon, the PLO presence was felt daily and resented greater, and Amal was relieved when Israel drove the PLO from Lebanon in 1982. However, as soon the PLO left, Amal began fighting the Israeli occupation with greater intensity,

⁸⁹ Usher, 62.

⁹⁰ Ihsan A. Hijazi, "Iranians Incite Lebanese Shiites to Militancy." *New York Times*, 1 September 1986, sec. 1, p. 4.

⁹¹ Anonymous Artist, c. 1984 Hizballah poster reprinted in Maasri (Poster 3.28), 82.

largely at Syria's behest. With the PLO out of Lebanon, Amal began its attempts to reconcile with the Maronite-controlled Government. Previous attempts at reconciliation with the Maronites under then-President Elias Sarkis' National Salvation Committee had failed and only drove more Shias to radicalism as explained previously. Israel's attempts at creating an Israeli-friendly Maronite regime in Lebanon led to Lebanese Forces leader Bashir Gemayel taking office in August 1982, which further alienated Lebanon's Muslims. Bashir and his Lebanese Forces militia had hailed the PLO's expulsion as their own victory, and refused to concede any political power to the Shia.⁹²

Less than a month after his election, President Bashir Gemayel was assassinated, and his more moderate brother Amin replaced him. Amal hoped Amin would be committed to reform and concede some Maronite power, yet this seemed unlikely as he commanded his own Maronite militia, the Phalange, and as President also commanded the Christian-dominated Lebanese Army. Amin continued to neglect the Shia, as when he did meet with the sect's representatives, he met with Kamil al-Assad, Nabih Berri and Musa al-Sadr's rival. Al-Assad was unpopular among the Shia, especially Amal's supporters, and Amal began distrusting the Lebanese Government and Maronite militias. Nevertheless, Amal leader Nabih Berri bowed to U.S. pressure in 1983 and for a second time found himself attempting reconciliation with the Maronites to no avail. His limited role in this process however would drive Amal into directly confronting the Maronites in Beirut.⁹³

In February 1984, Amal seized West Beirut, the traditionally Muslim half of the city, with the help of Syria. An Amal poster from this month depicts Amal leader Nabih Berri with the image of several Arabs lifting up barbed wire in rebellion below, and Musa al-Sadr's image

⁹² Norton, *Changing Actors*, 115-116.

⁹³ Norton, *Changing Actors*, 117.

is in the corner as if he watching over and “blessing” the events. The poster is captioned “lift hegemony and block Zionism,” with the “hegemony” referring to the Maronite control over the state and the “Zionism” referring to the Maronite alliance to Israel.⁹⁴ The imagery on the poster connects the struggle against the Maronites to the fight against the Israeli occupation of the South, and Amal’s depiction of a community uprising rather than religious or Iranian imagery shows the Movement’s emphasis of pan-Arabism over pan-Islamism.

When Hizballah arrived in West Beirut in mid-1984, the image of Ayatollah Khomeini soon appeared everywhere to mark Hizballah’s supporters and their turf. Hizballah also began imposing Islamic restrictions in this area, and clubs and bars closed fearing Hizballah liquor smashing raids or even attacks (alcohol consumption is forbidden in Islam).⁹⁵ However, it was Amal that dominated West Beirut due to Syrian presence, and in December 1985 Syria attempted to integrate militia order into the state and hoped to end the War through a Tripartite Agreement.⁹⁶ The three major militias in Beirut- the Maronite Lebanese Forces, Druze Progressive Socialist Party, and Shia Amal- signed onto the Agreement, which again split the Shia. Hassan Nasrallah of Hizballah condemned the Tripartite Agreement as “a labyrinth of wasted and useless dialogue,” and quoted Ayatollah Khomeini by stating “Jerusalem and Palestine will not be regained with political games but guns.”⁹⁷ He also refused to negotiate with the Israel-allied Christian Kataeb and Lebanese Forces parties, as he saw this as “like dialoguing with Israel itself.”⁹⁸ Syria however saw this Agreement as in its best interests, as the institutionalization of militia rule meant a weak Lebanese State that needed Syrian domination

⁹⁴ Nabil Kdouh, 1984 Amal poster reprinted in Maasri (Poster 3.22), 66.

⁹⁵ US Army 1st Special Operations Command, “Special Psychological Operations Study”

⁹⁶ El Khazen, 610.

⁹⁷ Al-Wahda Al-Islamiya Interview with Hassan Nasrallah from 3 February 1989 reprinted in Noe, 50.

⁹⁸ Al Khaleej Interview with Hassan Nasrallah from 11 March 1986 reprinted in Noe, 31.

for stability. This Agreement would fail in 1986 due to opposition from the Lebanese Forces and President Amin Gemayel, as they had the most to lose from any concessions.

When Israel withdrew to its security zone in 1985, Amal claimed to have played a significant role in coercing this retreat. Amal, although it supported the UN presence in Lebanon unlike Hizballah, insisted that Israel abandon its security zone and dismantle their proxy militia, the South Lebanon Army.⁹⁹ In a 1986 interview, Hassan Nasrallah mentioned Amal fighters as “brethren” and stated that Israel attacked both Amal and Hizballah equally after the PLO withdrawal.¹⁰⁰

Amal’s anti-Israeli political posters from the mid-1980’s tended to contain both pan-Arab and Islamic themes, although the religious themes tended to confer a popular struggle rather than a holy war. One such poster depicts a horse, a classical symbol of heroism in Arab culture, with the Quranic verse, “Be prepared for them with all you force” above.¹⁰¹ Another depicts a flock of birds dropping rocks on an Israeli force below, and is captioned “resistance, resistance until liberation.” There is a Quranic verse at the top of this poster, as the imagery alludes to a story from the Quran where a flock of birds dropped dozens of stones on attackers besieging the Kaaba (the holiest Muslim shrine) when its Muslim defenders were overpowered.¹⁰² Others depicted a popular struggle without religious themes, such as one depicting an Arab community rising up against an Israeli air attack with one of the Arabs crushing a Star of David with his bare hands. Reflecting the discrepancies in technology depicted, it is captioned “martyrdom is a pledge and commitment for victory and liberation” to demonstrate solidarity against a superior enemy.¹⁰³

The religious themes and hailing of martyrdom in these posters potentially show a growing

⁹⁹ Ihsan A. Hijazi, “Iranians Incite Lebanese Shiites to Militancy.”

¹⁰⁰ Al Khaleej Interview with Hassan Nasrallah from 11 March 1986 reprinted in Noe, 25.

¹⁰¹ Rafic Charaf, Mid-1980’s Amal poster reprinted in Maasri (Poster 1.6), 41.

¹⁰² Nabil Kdouh, Mid-1980’s Amal poster reprinted in Maasri (Poster 5.11), 108.

¹⁰³ Nabil Kdouh, Mid-1980’s Amal poster reprinted in Maasri (Poster 5.10), 108.

relationship between Amal and Hizballah, as both were Shia movements combating Israel. However, their shared Shia consistency also had caused the two groups to become rivals, and both began competing for foreign sponsorship as well Shia support.

Syria had played a significant role in Amal's policies since the Movement's creation, yet this influence greatly expanded under Nabih Berri. Syria remained allied to Amal after the Shia split into radicals and moderates, as it favored moderate leaders that it believed to be pragmatic and flexible.¹⁰⁴ In the 6th Congress of the Amal Movement in April 1986, Berri was re-elected as Amal's leader with Syrian support. Syria placed pressure on the 432 delegates representing various regions of Lebanon at the meeting to vote for Berri, and it is unlikely he would have been re-elected without Syria. In February 1987, the Druze Progressive Socialist Party and the Lebanese Communist Party attacked Amal in West Beirut, causing Nabih Berri to flee to Damascus and almost destroying Amal's Beirut headquarters. However, 7000 Syrian troops were rapidly dispatched to save Amal, and Berri would only return to Beirut after the Syrian army occupied the city.¹⁰⁵ It appeared as if Syria would not only determine who ran Amal, but also where Amal successfully had control in Lebanon.

In addition to Amal, Syria also possessed close ties with Hizballah's main sponsor, Iran. The Iranian Revolution convinced Syria that an alliance with Iran was necessary to compete with its regional Arab rivals Iraq, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, and provided aid to Iran during the Iran-Iraq War.¹⁰⁶ Amal on the other hand remained distant from Iran, regardless of its closeness with Syria. Its moderate leaders and ideology were committed to a secular solution, which clashed with the Iranian notion of an Islamic State in Lebanon. In 1986 Hassan Nasrallah stated that Amal and Hizballah disagreed on "the vision, methodology, and the fundamental, serious need to

¹⁰⁴ Norton, *Changing Actors*, 120.

¹⁰⁵ Deeb, 686-688.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 687.

unconditionally follow al-Khomeini's leadership," which had split the groups in the past.¹⁰⁷

Amal also felt betrayed by Iran, as the Islamic Republic had done nothing to investigate Musa al-Sadr's disappearance and did not repay Amal for supporting the overthrow of the Shah.

Additionally, Iran continued to support the PLO to counter Israel, yet ignored the plight this group brought upon the Shia of South Lebanon.¹⁰⁸ The pan-Arab Amal therefore did not receive external aid from Iran, and Syria would remain its only external sponsor. The pan-Islamic Hizballah however was fortunate enough to enjoy both Syrian and Iranian support for the majority of its existence.

Syria had been implicated in assisting Hizballah even prior to its official formation. In 1983 the CIA alleged radical Shia "had secured at least the acquiescence of Syria since they operate within and across Syrian lines," and believed Syria "promised additional support to radical Shia leaders to enable them to step up their anti-Western terrorism."¹⁰⁹ Similarly, a US Army profile alleged Syrian President Hafez al-Assad "quietly supported the emergence of pro-Iranian groups" because he and Iran shared the common enemy of Saddam Hussein.¹¹⁰ Syria was interested in Hizballah's military power, which it saw as its greatest asset, and desired to use both Amal and Hizballah to wage a proxy war against Israel and the South Lebanon Army. Hizballah remained closer to Iran than Syria however, and criticized Berri for submitting to Syria and its secular plan for Lebanon.

Amal remained the most powerful Shia militia until 1985, as Iranian aid would tip this balance of power in favor of Hizballah. Nasrallah stated that Hizballah's initial members "took advantage of the climate created by the Islamic Revolution and Syrian support to launch,"

¹⁰⁷ Al Khaleej Interview with Hassan Nasrallah from 11 March 1986 reprinted in Noe, 27.

¹⁰⁸ Ranstorp, 32.

¹⁰⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Terrorist Threat to Western Interests in Lebanon."

¹¹⁰ US Army 1st Special Operations Command, "Special Psychological Operations Study"

showing how the group received assistance from both nations since its inception. It is the aid of both Syria and Iran that allowed Hizballah to grow into such a powerful militant group, and a symbiotic relationship developed between Hizballah's patrons and the militant group exerting their will.

Although Hizballah and Amal shared Syrian support, a fight against Israel in the South, and a Shia constituency, normal competition and differences between these groups would explode over the issue of attacking Palestinian refugee camps.

Although the PLO had been largely expelled from Lebanon in 1982, contingents of Palestinian militants remained inside of refugee camps that had existed since Israel's establishment. Amal wanted to rid Lebanon of the PLO's influence once and for all out of opportunism; it sought to dominate South Lebanon and West Beirut, the two areas where the Palestinian militancy continued to linger the strongest. It also feared that Hizballah would attempt to take over South Lebanon and transform the area into an Islamist haven. Not surprisingly, Syria backed Amal in this mission, as Amal needed Syrian military support and Syria feared the Palestinians regaining strength and independence again after its previous anti-PLO campaign.¹¹¹ On May 19, 1985, Amal attacked Beirut's Shatilla refugee camp, officially beginning the "War of the Camps," and Amal would continue to attack these refugee camps on several occasions from 1985-1987 on Syria's behest.¹¹² While Amal and Syria saw the War of the Camps as an opportunity to consolidate power at the expense of a former opponent, Hizballah was taken aback by this campaign and stood up for the Palestinians.

Hizballah's support for the Palestinian cause against Israel was an important part of its ideology, despite the PLO being a secular and nationalist organization like Amal. It decried the

¹¹¹ Jaber, 34.

¹¹² Deeb, 697.

attack on the Palestinian refugee camps as an attack on the Arab and Muslim cause, and began providing humanitarian and even occasionally military support to the Palestinians. Most Lebanese Shia opposed Amal's goal of disarming the Palestinian refugee camps, and even more believe a militia should not be the one to handle disarmament, giving Hizballah greater appeal in this conflict.¹¹³ Although Syria supported both Amal and Hizballah, it feared Iran or Hizballah could gain too much autonomy and challenge its occupation, and knew Amal under Berri would never present such a challenge. When Iran tried to broker a cease-fire right away to stop the War of the Camps, Syria adamantly refused, and Amal and Hizballah regularly began fighting. In a 1986 interview, Hassan Nasrallah confirmed a rumored armed conflict erupting between Amal and Hizballah, but claimed that they had already overcome this situation with Iranian mediation, and said that speaking of future clashes was "nothing but a fanciful dream on the part of the enemy [Israel]." While he alleged that Amal wanted to prevent Hizballah from operating politically or militarily in some Southern areas, he said these disputes were solved in a cordial manner with a "spirit of brotherhood."¹¹⁴ Nasrallah's wishful thinking would turn out to be inaccurate, as the conflict would only intensify afterwards. In 1987, Syria would directly confront Hizballah with its own forces to assist Amal. This War of the PLO, Iran, and Hizballah against Amal and Syria would mark the split of Iran and Syria's decade-long military alliance.¹¹⁵

Although it seemed as if the War of the Camps was over by May 1988 after Iranian mediation and the deployment of the Syrian army in Beirut, the conflict would have a final flare-up in January 1989. When Amal's leadership held Iran accountable for the fighting, Iranian newspapers lashed out at Syria for supporting Amal against Hizballah, and blamed Syria for perpetuating the fighting. A newspaper article printed on January 12, 1989 tells that the Shia

¹¹³ Usher, 62-64.

¹¹⁴ Al Khaleej Interview with Hassan Nasrallah from 11 March 1986 reprinted in Noe, 27-30.

¹¹⁵ Ihsan A. Hijazi, "Shiite War Splits Syrians and Iran." *New York Times*, 12 January 1989, sec. A, p. 3

factions had been fighting for five days straight, and stated that Iran would continue fighting so long as “Syria’s design for terminating the Party of God is unfulfilled.” The article also states that the militias had conflicting accounts of the events on the ground, as Amal asserted it controlled 80% of one area in Southern Lebanon while Hizballah claimed it still held positions in this area. Hizballah seemed to dominate most of the time, but Amal did gain the decisive upper hand at times as Syria provided it with heavy weaponry and the presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon since 1976 prevented clashes between the groups in West Beirut.¹¹⁶ This conflict shows the extent to which Syria and Iran controlled Amal and Hizballah, and how both Lebanese groups could be manipulated into fighting a proxy war for a patron state.

By February of 1989, fighting between Amal and Hizballah would finally dwindle and Syria and Iran would create an agreement to end intra-Shia party violence. Syria’s trump card against Iran was that it threatened to reconcile with Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, Iran’s bitter enemy. This caused Iran to admit Syria’s dominance in Lebanon, as Iran admitted its leverage in the country was much more limited. The Agreement ending the violence allowed Hizballah to keep operating in South Lebanon and allowed Syrian troops to be deployed in traditional Hizballah strongholds such as South Beirut and the Bekaa Valley.¹¹⁷ Hizballah seemed to be relieved this conflict was over, as Hassan Nasrallah stated that “the mere fact the bloodshed shall cease is a great achievement for Shiism in Lebanon.” He acknowledged that both Syria and Iran had “a debt of blood to pay,” as Syria supported Amal in its attacks against Palestinian refugee camps and Iran felt it had a moral pan-Shia obligation to prevent violent within this sect.¹¹⁸ Although Syria could have wiped out Hizballah with Amal and its own army, it did not want to completely ruin its relationship with Iran at the benefit of its regional rivals. Syria ultimately gained from

¹¹⁶ Ihsan A. Hijazi, “Shitite War Splits Syrians and Iran.”

¹¹⁷ Jaber, 35.

¹¹⁸ Al-Wahda Al-Islamiya Interview with Hassan Nasrallah from 3 February 1989 reprinted in Noe, 35.

this conflict with Hizballah, as it proved its domination over Lebanon and that Amal was not to be challenged. It also allowed President Hafez al-Assad to send more troops to Lebanon with international support under the guise that they would be used to curb Hizballah. However, these troops were used to further Syria's occupation of Lebanon, and remained after Syria and Hizballah had reconciled.¹¹⁹

Not long after this reconciliation, Lebanese politicians would meet in Taif, Saudi Arabia in October 1989 to sign an agreement to end the War brokered by Syria. This treaty, called the Taif Agreement, provided the framework for a post-war Lebanon where Muslims claimed their fair share of representation at the expense of the Maronites. For this reason, Maronites and militia leaders that had more at stake to preserve in war-torn Lebanon would resist the Accords, and the majority of Maronites would boycott the first post-war elections in 1992.¹²⁰ The Accords were not definitive or revolutionary however, as they would not do away with the Confessionalist system and instead opted to maintain a proper balance between the Sunni, Shia, Christians, and Druze. The Taif Accords also provided for the transformation of militias into political parties, as all militias were forced to disarm with their passing. One militia would remain an exception however: Hizballah.

Syria permitted Hizballah to keep its vast cache of arms as a "resistance" movement, as by this time Hizballah had grown to become a complex military force of several thousand men and was engaged in guerrilla warfare against Israel and its South Lebanon Army proxy. Syria's military occupation of 35,000 troops in Lebanon continued after the War, and Lebanon's foreign and domestic policies were largely made in Damascus. While Hizballah fared well under this occupation, Christian factions fared the worst and Lebanese Forces was banned as a party in

¹¹⁹ Deeb, 697.

¹²⁰ Usher, 60.

1993 for their antagonism to Syria during the War.¹²¹ Israel also continued to occupy the Southern security zone past 1990, and Hizballah used this occupation as justification for maintaining its arms. Israel justified its post-War occupation by claiming that it secured its Northern border against the same incursions that brought it into Lebanon in the first place. Syria also used the continuing Israeli occupation to justify its own occupation, and Syrian control of Hizballah in South Lebanon gave it the power to disturb Israel's northern border. Syria would use this power as a bargaining chip when discussing the return of the Golan Heights (a part of Syria occupied by Israel since 1967) with Israel.¹²² Both Israel and Syria would occupy Lebanon out of self-interest, and Lebanon would not be independent until long after the War.

Syria's occupation of Lebanon meant it controlled who dominated Lebanese politics, and this allowed the Shia to benefit. Syria desired for Hizballah to remain more of a military force against Israel than a political party, and Amal continued to be Syria's choice in the political realm.¹²³ Amal's leader, Nabih Berri, became Lebanon's Speaker of Parliament in 1992, a post which he still occupies today. However, Hizballah did not only function as a militia, and also entered the political realm after the War. It quickly began to assert itself as a Shia political party, challenging Amal's political power, and gained credibility for partaking in an active armed conflict against the Israeli occupation. Since most Lebanese political parties are former militias drawing support from a specific sect, public issues such as governance, freedom of expression, human rights, and foreign policy are underemphasized in Lebanese politics.¹²⁴ In this climate, a party such as Hizballah with its ideologically extreme view of the Arab-Israeli conflict can gain support as its actual domestic policies are underplayed.

¹²¹ El Khazen, 611-612.

¹²² Najem, 4007.

¹²³ Usher, 65.

¹²⁴ El Khazen, 618

Hizballah's status as the sole armed party remaining would allow it to draw in droves of new recruits. It had strong financial backing from Iran, which allowed it to establish welfare institutions that only expanded its popularity by assisting those in need either faster or better than the Lebanese Government. After Israel's "Grapes of Wrath" operation devastated South Lebanon in 1996, Hizballah claimed to have repaired 5,000 homes in 82 villages to have rebuilt roads, infrastructure, and paid compensation to 2,300 farmers all within the space of two months. Around the time that the Taif Accords were passed however, Hizballah abandoned its calls for an Islamic State in Lebanon and supported the multi-confessional realities the Accords established.¹²⁵ Hassan Nasrallah himself stated that "regarding the project of the Islamic Republic, I can tell you that we will never propose this action per se in Lebanon" and "have never proposed the idea of imposing an Islamic Republic in Lebanon by force." However, he did state that if the Lebanese people did make the very unlikely choice of an Islamic system, Hizballah would be happy to support it as Nasrallah still believed an Islamic system would be able to solve Lebanon's problems. Most importantly, Nasrallah denied Hizballah being an Iranian pawn in Lebanon, stating that, "Hizballah is not an Iranian community in Lebanon, and its fighters and mujahidin are not Iranian citizens" but rather the "sons of southern towns and villages." When confronted about the aid, training, and arms received from Iran, he simply claimed Iran was a friend lending it support in its fight against Israel and that Iran was always willing to help even when other Arab states were not due to Ayatollah Khomeini's pan-Islamic ideology.¹²⁶

Hizballah has since attempted to reinvent itself as a wholly Lebanese party dedicated to abolishing political sectarianism, but pledged to use only legitimate political means to achieve

¹²⁵ Usher, 63-64.

¹²⁶ Al-Watan Al-Arabi Interview with Hassan Nasrallah from 11 September 1992, reprinted in Noe, 89-92.

this end. Regardless of its political agenda and alleged “Lebanonization,” Hizballah remains heavily dependent on Iran and Syria for its arms and funding. Hizballah’s political power, arms, popularity among the Shia, and backing from Iran and Syria have allowed it to continue its privileged existence.¹²⁷ It grew increasingly autonomous from the Lebanese authorities, and many Lebanese politicians continue to allege Hizballah runs “a state within a state.”

Israeli troops unilaterally withdrew from South Lebanon in May 2000 amid negative publicity from mounting Israeli soldier and Lebanese civilian deaths. Hizballah appeared as the victor when Israel received no concessions for this retreat, and its South Lebanon Army client militia immediately surrendered or fled to Israel. However, the Syrian occupation became much more difficult to justify with Israel gone, and many Lebanese would begin calling for Syria’s withdrawal too.¹²⁸ In 2005, Syria was implicated in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, a charge which Syria continues to deny. As a result, Syria’s occupation of Lebanon finally ended following massive anti-occupation protests called the “Cedar Revolution.” The Shia, having benefitting much from Syria’s occupation, did not participate in these protests. In 2006 Hizballah’s capture of two Israeli soldiers would spark a war between the two, and Lebanon’s Army would remain neutral. This war would devastate Lebanon, causing massive damage and heavy civilian casualties, and Hassan Nasrallah even regretted provoking this conflict due to its catastrophic results. In 2008, the U.S.-backed Lebanese Government would threaten to shut down Hizballah’s extensive telecommunications network and remove Beirut’s airport security chief over alleged ties to Hizballah. Hizballah would respond by seizing Beirut with Amal’s help, nearly sparking another Civil War, and the Lebanese Army would be ordered not to intervene as its leaders feared sectarian fragmentation. Hizballah has since

¹²⁷ El Khazen, 618.

¹²⁸ Najem, 4006.

remained the premier military force in Lebanon, and is widely believed to be more powerful than the Lebanese Army.

The Shia of Lebanon came a long way from their neglected underclass status before the War to being the supreme military force in Lebanon after its end. While Musa al-Sadr began a grassroots movement to lead the Shia out of their backwards economic condition, it quickly became swept up in the turbulence of the Civil War and joined the countless ranks of combating militias. After his disappearance, his Amal Movement would become little more than a Syrian client militia. The Iranian Revolution and Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon would propel many Shia into a radicalism, and Iran would take advantage of its followers in Lebanon to make Hizballah into its own client militia. The War of the Camps became a proxy war between the two patron states, and the post-War occupation of Syria would ensure that the Shia remained dominant. Hizballah continues to be backed by Iran and Syria, although the latter no longer occupies Lebanon, and this patronage coupled with Hizballah's armed capabilities are almost always referenced in contemporary news articles. The Amal Movement is less popular without its arms, although it gave Hizballah armed assistance in 2006 and 2008. This has caused the Shia of Lebanon to be known primarily for their militancy, an image they would be better off without. If Hizballah wishes to be taken seriously as a political party, it cannot remain as a heavily armed Syrian-Iranian client in Lebanon that uses violence to accomplish its goals. Additionally, a stronger Lebanese Government that is able to provide for its citizens faster and better than Hizballah in terms of both social services and defense will curb its influence and strengthen the trust in the Government lost during the Civil War. Until then, it as if Lebanon has yet to fully achieve independence due to the foreign influences lingering there today, especially among the Shia.