



ISLAMIST GROUPS IN LEBANON

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The article examines the evolution of three distinct poles of Islamism in Lebanon and how they have adapted to changes in local political and security conditions over the past three decades.

Although Lebanon's ethno-sectarian demography is manifestly unsuitable for the establishment of an Islamic state, the salience of militant Islamist movements in this tiny Mediterranean country has few parallels. Above and beyond the regional conditions fueling Islamic revivalism, Lebanon's weak state, acute socioeconomic and political inequities, and experience of pervasive external intervention converged to create an unusually permissive environment for Islamists. Under these circumstances, radical Islamism has become a powerful instrument of communitarian social mobilization and an effective vehicle for drawing resources from the outside world.

BACKGROUND

The modern state of Lebanon is a unique amalgam of 18 officially recognized religious sects, the product of over a millennium of immigration by Christians and heterodox Muslims from the surrounding Sunni Islamic world and deliberate colonial border demarcation following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Political offices in Lebanon have been distributed among its sectarian communities by fixed quotas. Under the terms of the 1943 National Pact, the presidency is reserved for Maronite Christians, the office of prime minister for Sunni Muslims, and the office of parliament speaker for Shi'a Muslims. Parliament seats were divided among Christian and Muslim sects by a 6:5 ratio until 1989, then evenly afterwards. In addition, the Lebanese constitution and subsequent laws grant the religious

establishment of each sectarian community authority over matters pertaining to personal status (e.g. marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance).

Lebanon's sectarian system (*al-nizam al-ta'ifiyya*) proved to be an effective barrier against the rise of an authoritarian state (which, in the Arab world, invariably entails the monopolization of power by one ethno-sectarian group), but it also reified patron-client relationships *within* the country's confessional communities and inhibited the growth of a common national identity. This paved the way for outside intervention from multiple quarters, the breakdown of the state, a long civil war, and an internationally sanctioned Syrian occupation. These crisis conditions have heavily shaped the evolution of radical Islamist groups.

While any explicit taxonomy of actors in the highly idiosyncratic and fluid sociopolitical environment of modern Lebanon is necessarily imprecise, three poles of Islamic fundamentalism are readily discernable. Shi'a Islamism in Lebanon has evolved along one broad institutionalized trajectory under the guidance of clerics, a distinct hallmark reflecting the exalted spiritual status of the *ulama* (religious scholars) in Shi'a Islam and the communitarian solidarity of Lebanese Shi'as. Sunni Islamism in Lebanon has been much more fluid and fragmented, with two distinct ideological currents--political Islamism and Salafism.

SHI'A ISLAMISM IN LEBANON

The emergence of radical Islamism among Lebanese Shi'as is rooted in the community's longstanding political and socioeconomic deprivation.¹

Despite constituting the country's largest single sectarian group, Shi'as were awarded the third-largest share of parliamentary seats in Lebanon's First Republic and barred from the two highest government offices. Moreover, Shi'a political representation was dominated by feudal landlords who had little interest in the socioeconomic advancement of their constituents.

By the mid-1970s, Shi'a parochial allegiances were steadily eroding as a result of rising education levels, the influx of new wealth from Shi'a emigrants, and rapid urbanization owing to state neglect of the agricultural sector and increasingly destructive Israeli reprisals against the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in south Lebanon.² Most politicized Shi'as gravitated toward leftist or Arab nationalist parties that challenged the legitimacy of Lebanon's confessional power-sharing system until the late 1960s, when Sayyid Musa al-Sadr's *Harakat al-Mahrumin* (Movement of the Deprived) emerged as a moderate force focused on advancing Shi'a communal interests within the Lebanese system. Although Sadr was committed to the peaceful pursuit of modest social, economic, and political change, his movement's religious idiom resonated deeply. Whereas Sunni theology is centered on the prerogatives of rulers, Shi'ism is imbued with the ethos of resistance to tyranny and oppression.

Revolutionary Shi'a Islamism emerged as a third pole of identification after the outbreak of civil war in 1975, espoused by a younger generation of clerics who were radicalized during their studies in the Shi'a seminaries of Ba'thist Iraq. The most prominent, Sayyid Husayn Fadlallah, called for the impoverished and dispossessed Shi'as of Lebanon to take up

arms not in defense of their class or sect (as the Amal militia of Sadr's successor, Nabih Berri, claimed to do), but in defense of the Islamic faith,³ a seemingly quixotic vision that suddenly gained credibility after the 1979 revolution in Shi'a Iran. Following Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, contingents of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) entered the Syrian-controlled Beqaa Valley of eastern Lebanon with plentiful cash, weapons, and a proven model for revolutionary action.

Although Fadlallah maintained his independence (and later came to dismiss publicly the religious qualifications of Iran's clerical leadership),⁴ a host of younger and lesser-known Lebanese clerics in the Beqaa readily accepted Iranian patronage, most notably Subhi al-Tufayli and Abbas al-Musawi. Loosely organized under the name Hizballah (Party of God), they embraced Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's doctrine of *wilayat al-faqih* (the theological basis for clerical rule enshrined in Iran's constitution) and formally vowed to establish an Islamic Republic in Lebanon (to this day, Hizballah's flag bears the inscription "the Islamic Revolution in Lebanon") through peaceful means. In practice, however, this aspiration has always been subordinate to the pursuit of armed struggle against Israeli and Western "oppressors." While few Lebanese Shi'as harbored the kind of deep historical grievances against Israel and the West felt by most Sunni Arabs, they had borne the brunt of the Israeli invasion and feared that the entry of an American and European multi-national force (MNF) into Beirut months later would empower Lebanon's governing alliance of Christian Phalangists and Sunni Beirut notables at their expense.

From the spring of 1983 to the summer of 1985, underground Lebanese Shi'a terrorist cells linked to Hizballah (or, more precisely, spawned by the same Iranian patronage network) carried out a spectacular wave of suicide bombings against Western and Israeli military and diplomatic targets that resulted in

the withdrawal of the MNF and the redeployment of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to a thin "security zone" in the south. The June 1985 hijacking of TWA Flight 847 by Shi'a Islamists forced Israel to release over 700 Lebanese and Palestinian detainees captured during the war. These astonishing successes salved the Lebanese Shi'a community's intense feelings of victimization and demonstrated that religious devotion could compensate for its material weaknesses.⁵ For a minority sect traditionally viewed with disdain by religious Sunnis and distrust by Arab nationalists, it also brought a powerful dose of collective vindication.

For all of its relentless violence against the West and Israel, Hizballah rarely engaged in the kind of indiscriminate bloodletting characteristic of other wartime militias (a "purity of arms" that remains integral to its public image in Lebanon today). Shi'a suicide bombings against Western peacekeepers and diplomats, while abhorrent, "achieved pinpoint precision--an unusual technique for Beirut, where exploding cars usually killed indiscriminately," notes Martin Kramer.⁶ Similarly, Hizballah's kidnapping of dozens of Western nationals contrasted sharply with the thousands of indiscriminate abductions and summary executions perpetrated by other militias during the war. At any rate, Hizballah gradually phased out such methods as it built its conventional military strength and developed a formal leadership structure.⁷

As Hizballah racked up victories against foreign "oppressors," Iranian funding enabled it to build a vast network of schools, hospitals, and other social welfare institutions. By the latter half of the decade, Shi'a living standards in areas of the Beqaa and southern Beirut under its control were higher in most respects than they were *before* the war. This combination of "resistance" and relief has remained central to Hizballah's popular appeal.

Notwithstanding the strategic alliance that emerged between Tehran and Damascus in the

1980s, Hizballah bitterly fought the Syrians⁸ and their local proxies at times (particularly the rival Shi'a Amal militia), in part because it recognized that Syrian hegemony would constrain its freedom of action in fighting Israel and restore Lebanon's antebellum power-sharing system.⁹ After Syrian forces completed their conquest of Lebanon in October 1990, however, Hizballah accepted the legitimacy of Lebanon's Second Republic in return for a virtually exclusive right to organize "resistance" to the IDF in south Lebanon (other Lebanese and Palestinian groups were allowed only subordinate token participation).¹⁰

Massive Iranian arms shipments, airlifted to Damascus and driven overland to the Beqaa, enabled the organization to build one of the best-equipped paramilitary forces in the world. Following the 1992 ascension of Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, Hizballah introduced a much more rigorous level of training, sophisticated new tactics, and a sweeping reorientation from religious to nationalist discourse more acceptable to the broader Lebanese public (and the Syrians). Although the ebb and flow of its operations were carefully regulated by Damascus in accordance with the climate of Syrian relations with Israel, Hizballah was clearly in charge of the campaign and reaped the political benefits of its success.

In return for these prerogatives, Hizballah accepted a postwar political order that perpetuated Shi'a deprivation.¹¹ While the 1989 Taif Accord transferred the lion's share of executive power from the Christian presidency to the Sunni premiership, Shi'as received only a slight strengthening of the parliamentary speakership and a marginal increase in parliamentary representation. Moreover, the Syrians prohibited Hizballah from freely competing for this meager allotment of seats, forcing it to form electoral coalitions with Amal and other favored (and therefore unpopular) Syrian clients.¹²

In addition, Hizballah was obliged to live

with socio-economic policies that privileged the postwar commercial elite. The unregulated influx of unskilled Syrian workers into Lebanon (critical both to Damascus and to the Lebanese construction tycoons who made fortunes rebuilding the country) pushed the predominantly Shi'a urban poor out of the workforce,¹³ while Syrian produce smugglers and government neglect of the countryside drove destitute Shi'a farmers into bankruptcy.¹⁴ Income inequality steadily increased¹⁵ as the late Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri cut income and corporate taxes to a flat ten percent, while raising indirect taxes (e.g. gasoline) on the public at large, slashing social expenditures, and freezing public sector wages.

Ironically, these inequities *strengthened* Hizballah by perpetuating the Shi'a community's dependence on its social welfare institutions and discrediting rival political forces. By excluding itself from government and delivering both resistance and social services with amazing efficiency, Hizballah projected an image of incorruptibility that contrasted starkly with the legendary excesses of the governing elite. This was critical to its success in raising funds from the Lebanese Shi'a diaspora, both through donations and through a variety of illicit enterprises (e.g. the blood diamond trade in West Africa, cigarette smuggling, and audiovisual bootlegging in the Americas) that required its supporters to take great risks.¹⁶ By the end of the 1990s, Hizballah's own financial resources substantially exceeded its handouts from Iran.

As Hizballah recast itself as a national liberation movement, it effectively abandoned the pursuit of an Islamic state in Lebanon.¹⁷ Although Hizballah leaders called for ending the political system organized along the lines of religious community (a step which arguably could pave the way for an Islamic state down the road by first enshrining majority rule), they displayed far less inclination to root out "un-Islamic" influences in Lebanese society than even the most mainstream Sunni clerics (see below).¹⁸

While Hizballah's "Lebanonization" (and Nasrallah's Clintonesque public statements)¹⁹ led many outside observers to predict that it would promptly lay down its arms and become a "normal" political party once Israeli troops withdrew from south Lebanon,²⁰ such forecasts failed to recognize that these choices revealed little about the underlying intentions of Hizballah leaders--beyond a concern with attracting as large a popular base of support as possible within the Shi'a community and Lebanon as a whole. Since religiosity has not been a primary determinant of Shi'a popular support for Hizballah (as shown by Judith Palmer Harik's survey of Shi'a public opinion at the end of the civil war),²¹ secular discourse was favored to win non-Shi'a support. Since the goal of "national liberation" garnered broader appeal than other rationales for fighting Israel, nationalist discourse was favored.

While the expectation that pursuit of Shi'a political hegemony would lead Hizballah to "normalize" seemed plausible to many, it presupposed a "normal" Lebanese public sphere in which government policies derive from a competitive political process (democratic or not). Nothing of the sort existed in Syrian-occupied Lebanon, where the main parameters of foreign and domestic policy were inviolable (especially with respect to Shi'a empowerment).²² Consequently, giving up the enormous reputational benefits derived from projecting itself as the vanguard of the Arab-Islamic struggle against Zionism would have condemned Hizballah to political oblivion.

This is not to say that Nasrallah would have rushed to convert swords into ploughshares after Israel's May 2000 withdrawal had the system been receptive to Shi'a empowerment, but lack of opportunities to effect domestic change made it easier for him to ignore normalization advocates within both Hizballah (particularly its parliamentary bloc) and the Shi'a community at large.²³ Most Shi'as see the "resistance" as a form of compensation for

their political and economic deprivation and a critical instrument of communal leverage. They will not be willing to fully discard it until Shi'as are given pride of place alongside Sunnis and Christians in setting the political and economic parameters of state policy.

The outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000 provided a conducive strategic climate for continued "resistance," as Israel was too preoccupied with Palestinian violence on its doorstep to undertake a major military campaign in Lebanon. After resuming sporadic cross-border attacks against Israeli forces in the fall of 2000, Hizballah steadily expanded its rocket arsenal (further deterring a major Israeli incursion) and played a more direct role in financing, training, and equipping Palestinian terrorists (ensuring that the violence in the West Bank and Gaza didn't recede sufficiently for Israel to risk a war in Lebanon). Hizballah's television station, al-Manar, began broadcasting by satellite and introduced a tidal wave of new programming intended to incite violence against Israel.²⁴ Although Nasrallah repeatedly insisted that Hizballah would not stand in the way of a peace settlement acceptable to the Palestinian people,²⁵ his slippery disclaimers implied a virtually unreachable threshold of consensus.

Although the withdrawal of Israeli forces from south Lebanon led to a spike in public admiration for Hizballah, the recession of this external threat also gave others in the Shi'a community more freedom to assert themselves. The outwardly amicable relationship between Nasrallah and Fadlallah grew more contentious and occasionally erupted into public acrimony,²⁶ while recurrent clashes between members of Hizballah and Amal sent dozens to the hospital (and a few to the morgue).

However, as mounting pressure on Syria to withdraw from Lebanon merged seamlessly into pressure for the disarmament of Hizballah, the Shi'a community rallied behind Nasrallah. Whatever misgivings they may have had about Hizballah, the vast majority of

Lebanese Shi'as remained unwilling to entrust their security to the state and fearful of being marginalized after disarmament. In light of the Lebanese army's brutal slaying of five unarmed Shi'as who were protesting fuel price increases in May 2004, it's not difficult to understand why.

SUNNI ISLAMISM IN LEBANON

While Sunni Islamism in Lebanon evolved against the same backdrop of "macro" crisis conditions (e.g. Maronite Christian political hegemony, the collapse of the state, pervasive foreign intervention), it derives from a different theological tradition and has been heavily conditioned by the historical experience of Sunnis in Lebanon.

In contrast to Shi'a ulama, Sunni clerics in Lebanon (and elsewhere) have historically been little more than "religious functionaries" of the state,²⁷ more often than not finding themselves in opposition to Islamist movements. Consequently, Sunni Islamism has been less institutionalized and highly diffuse.

In sharp contrast to Shi'as, Lebanese Sunnis have been overwhelmingly urban since the establishment of Lebanon (concentrated in the northern port of Tripoli, the southern port of Sidon, and Beirut) and occupy no broad swathes of geographically contiguous territory. They are also unique among Lebanon's major sectarian communities in not having developed a minoritarian outlook. Whereas Shi'as, Maronites and Druze have traditionally seen themselves as islands in a vast Sunni Islamic sea, Lebanese Sunnis were part of that sea until the fall of the Ottoman Empire and deeply resented their absorption into a Greater Lebanon in the early 1920s (Shi'as were much more ambivalent). All of this makes them highly receptive to a multiplicity of influences from the surrounding Arab world.

While the Sunni elites who agreed to the 1943 National Pact had concrete interests in

common with their Christian counterparts that were best preserved in an independent Lebanon (evident in the subsequent domination of Sunni politics by a very small number of prominent families),²⁸ the formation of Lebanon hurt the interests of most Sunnis. Tripoli, once equal in economic weight to Beirut, was cut off from its traditional trade relations with the Syrian interior and declined in relative prosperity (which is one reason why all major currents of Lebanese Sunni Islamism have been centered in the city), as did Sidon after its trade routes to Palestine were cut in 1948. While socioeconomic deprivation has served to unite the Shi'a community, it has been a source of division among Sunnis.

Adding to the diffuse nature of Sunni Islamism in Lebanon is its development along two distinct doctrinal axes—political Islamism, as embodied by the Muslim Brotherhood and its offshoots, and Salafi Islamism—neither of which has found a charismatic leader on par with Nasrallah or a state sponsor wholly committed to its propagation.

The Political Islamists

In spite of the Sunni notability's acceptance of the 1943 National Pact, the first decade of Lebanon's independence witnessed a number of Sunni religious movements publicly embracing the *idea* of an Islamic state, most notably Ibad al-Rahman (Worshippers of the Merciful). However, the 1964 establishment of the Lebanese branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, known as al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Association), marked a watershed in several respects. Led by Tripoli natives Fathi Yakan and Faysal Mawlawi, al-Jama'a saw the pursuit of an Islamic state as a viable (if long-term and incremental) political project and a counter to the burgeoning appeal of secular Arab nationalism as the ideology of choice for disaffected young Sunnis.

Al-Jama'a was fiercely opposed to both Sunni political elites and the Sunni religious

establishment, known as Dar al-Fatwa. Although Dar al-Fatwa administered a vast network of mosques, schools, civil courts, and other social institutions, politicians exerted enormous influence over it by manipulating the (predominantly non-clerical) electoral college that selects the Sunni grand mufti, who in turn controls subordinate appointments. This was especially intolerable to Yakan and Mawlawi, because it contrasted so sharply with the Maronite church (as they saw it)—a religious establishment that not only doesn't answer to political elites, but has the moral authority and social "imbeddedness" to exert influence over them. Al-Jama'a began building its own network of schools and charities to compete with those of Dar al-Fatwa (and with the Maqasid Foundation, a charitable network then controlled by the Salam family).

The outbreak of civil war and the breakdown of the state effectively severed the political elite's hold over Dar al-Fatwa, creating a free for all in which prominent Sunni clerics fell under the influence of whichever armed forces were ascendant.²⁹ Although al-Jama'a fielded a modest militia that fought alongside Palestinian and Lebanese leftist groups against Christian forces early in the war, it became fragmented as the fault lines of the war shifted. In 1976, Syrian military forces entered Lebanon to stave off the defeat of the Christians, an intervention seen by most radical Sunni Islamists in both countries as a nefarious power play by Alawites (the heterodox Islamic minority sect that dominates Syria's Ba'thist regime) to subvert Sunni influence. However, while Sunni Islamists in Sidon largely acquiesced to Syria's tightening grip over most of the country, a host of radical splinters of al-Jama'a sprouted up in and around Tripoli to combat Syrian-backed militia forces, most notably Ismat Murad's Harakat Lubnan al-Arabi (Arab Lebanon Movement), Kana'an Naji's Jundallah (Soldiers of God), and Khalil Akkawi's al-Muqawama al-Sha'biyya (Popular Resistance). In 1982, these factions formed Harakat al-Tawhid al-Islami (the

Islamic Unification Movement, IUM) under the leadership of the charismatic preacher Said Sha'ban (who famously lamented that Lebanese Christians would have emigrated to Cyprus or Latin America had the Syrians not intervened).³⁰

Taking advantage of Syria's weakness in the aftermath of Israel's invasion of Lebanon, Tawhid forces (swelled by an influx of Syrian Islamists who escaped the Asad regime's apocalyptic showdown with the Muslim Brotherhood) seized control over much of Tripoli and forged an alliance with the PLO. For two years, they imposed Islamic law at gunpoint in neighborhoods they controlled (e.g. banning alcohol and forcing women to veil) and executed dozens of political opponents (mostly Communists). The shrinking of Tripoli's Christian minority from 20 percent of the population before the war to five percent today was largely the result of this brief interlude.³¹

In the autumn of 1985, Syrian forces swept into the city and brought Tawhid's mini-state to an end. Sha'ban's close relations with Iran and recognition of Syria's resolve ("Tripoli is not dearer to us than Hama," Vice-President Abd al-Halim Khaddam reportedly told him at the time, referring to the Syrian city razed by his government a few years earlier)³² led him to reach an accommodation with Damascus, but other Tawhid "emirs" fought on until they were physically eliminated (e.g. Akkawi) or captured (e.g. Minqara and hundreds of others).

Although armed Sunni Islamist resistance to Syrian forces in Lebanon disappeared after 1986, the Syrians took no chances, brutally eliminating Sunni public figures who expressed even the faintest hint of anti-Syrian dissent.³³ While a large majority of Lebanese Sunnis opposed Lebanon's separation from Syria in the 1920s, at the end of the civil war just three percent favored unification.³⁴

In conjunction with its suppression of radical Sunni Islamists, Syria supported the

growth of a hitherto obscure movement known as al-Ahbash. Founded by Shaykh Abdallah al-Hirari, an Islamic scholar of East African origins (al-Ahbash literally means "the Ethiopians") who immigrated to Lebanon in 1950, the movement blended Sunni and Shi'a theology with Sufi spiritualism into a doctrinal eclecticism that preached nonviolence and political quietism.³⁵ However, the institutional arm of the movement, Jam'iyyat al-Mashari al-Khayriyya al-Islamiyya (Association of the Islamic Philanthropic Projects), underwent a bizarre metamorphosis as Damascus expanded its grip on the country, forcibly seizing control over prominent mosques and hiring ex-members of the defunct Sunni Murabitun militia to defend them. After Syria completed its conquest of Lebanon in 1990, al-Ahbash grew into the country's largest Sunni religious organization. By the middle of the decade, al-Ahbash leader Nizar al-Halabi was reportedly being groomed by the Syrians to become grand mufti.

Sunni preachers had to contend with very restrictive Syrian "red lines" if they wished to play any part in Lebanese public life during the occupation. Religious mobilization on political issues was permissible only if the target of opprobrium was Israel, moderate Arab regimes, or Lebanese critics of the Syrian occupation--particularly for those who held official positions in Dar al-Fatwa. The Union of Akkar Ulama became a virtual mouthpiece of Syrian intelligence, known for its inflammatory denunciations of those who criticized the Syrian occupation.³⁶ Even Grand Mufti Muhammad Rashid Qabbani routinely offered obsequious praise of the Syrians.³⁷

Al-Jama'a and Tawhid courted the Syrians in hopes of gaining influence in government, but the payoffs of their cooperation were meager to begin with and steadily diminished as Syria consolidated its control over Lebanon. Al-Jama'a participated in the heavily Syrian-orchestrated electoral process and saw three of its candidates elected in 1992 (Yakan and Asad Harmush in north Lebanon, Zuhayr al-Ubaydi in Beirut), but this dropped to one in

1996 and none in 2000. After al-Tawhid experienced a resurgence in the late 1990s, the Syrians released Minqara from prison in a transparent (and successful) attempt to splinter the movement ahead of the 2000 elections.

A critical element of Syria's campaign to defuse Sunni militancy was its support for Hariri's ambitious drive to break the political power of traditional Beirut Sunni families. The prime minister's well-funded electoral machine replaced the scions of these families with colorless businessmen interested only in reaping as big a windfall as possible from the country's reconstruction. After the 1996 elections, Hariri passed controversial legislation removing most sitting ulama from the electoral college that appoints the grand mufti, increasing the subordination of Dar al-Fatwa to the governing elite even further. By eliminating political pluralism within the Sunni community, the Syrians ensured that political Islamists would find few receptive allies within government.

Denied the freedom to criticize substantive aspects of governance, mainstream Sunni clerics and Islamists alike crusaded against un-Islamic cultural influences in Lebanon. In sharp contrast to Hizballah, the political platform of al-Jama'a in the 1998 municipal elections (where the absence of fixed sectarian quotas obviates the need to attract non-Muslim voters) called for banning alcohol, horse racing, and other immoralities (an effective pitch that netted one third of the seats in Sidon and Tripoli).³⁸ Dar al-Fatwa crusaded against books, films, and music ostensibly offensive to Islam. Qabbani was largely responsible for the 1999 indictment on blasphemy charges of Lebanese Christian singer Marcel Khalife (who was publicly defended by Fadlallah and most other top Shi'a clerics).³⁹

By heavily curtailing the ability of political Islamists to exert influence in national government and indirectly encouraging clerical assaults on secularism and non-Islamic culture, the Syrians unwittingly facilitated the

expansion of a more deeply puritanical strand of Sunni Islamism.

The Salafists

Salafism is a puritanical Sunni current that seeks to emulate the "righteous ancestors" (*al-salaf al-salih*) of early Islamic history and to purge the faith of fallacious innovations (*bid'a*). While most Salafists pursue this goal non-violently through missionary and educational activity, others (commonly dubbed Salafi-jihadists) embrace violence to achieve its aims. "Both have the same objective... to convert society into an Islamic society," explains Lebanese journalist Hazim al-Amin, but "vary in the method of achieving it."⁴⁰ The Salafi current in Tripoli, founded by Shaykh Salim al-Shahal in the mid-1970s, largely confined itself to religious education and charity work for two decades.

In sharp contrast to the political Islamist currents, Salafists and Salafi-jihadists are largely apolitical. The former eschew involvement in local politics so as to maintain the freedom to disseminate their message to the people with minimal interference from the state, while the latter do so to maintain freedom of action in fighting the enemies of Islam abroad. Both abjure any national identity, claiming allegiance to the universal community of Muslim believers (*umma*).

A second distinguishing feature of Salafi currents is intolerance of heterodox Muslims. Although Tawhid's aggressive imposition of Islamic law in Tripoli may have appealed to Salafists, Shahal viewed Sha'ban's close relations with Iran (and, later on, with Syria) as an abomination.

A third important characteristic of the Salafi current in Lebanon is the prominent role of preachers who studied theology in Saudi Arabia, where the ultra-orthodox Wahhabi sect dominates. Salim al-Shahal had very close ties with the late head of Saudi Arabia's Council of Senior Islamic Scholars (and future grand mufti), Shaykh Abd al-Aziz ibn

Abdallah ibn Baz, who arranged for hundreds of Lebanese and Palestinian students to enroll in Islamic studies programs at Saudi universities during the civil war (including Shahal's son, Dai al-Islam). Fueled by funding from wealthy Saudi donors (and enjoying a measure of immunity from state interference because of close Syrian-Saudi relations), the Salafi current quietly established a strong social foundation in Tripoli and in the nearby Baddawi and Nahr al-Barid Palestinian refugee camps during the early 1990s.⁴¹

However, the emergence of the Salafi-jihadist current in Lebanon began not in the north, but in the Palestinian refugee camp of Ayn al-Hilwah, on the outskirts of the southern Lebanese port of Sidon. Until the early 1990s, Islamist currents in the camp were predominantly Iranian-backed and operated in conjunction with Hizballah, prime among them an armed network known as Ansarallah (Partisans of God), established by Hisham Shraydi. After Shraydi was assassinated in 1991, his successor, Abd al-Karim al-Saadi (aka Abu Muhjin), initiated a sweeping reorientation in the group's religious identification and renamed it Asbat al-Ansar (League of Partisans).

This transformation was partly due to the fact that the Syrians severely curtailed Palestinian attacks against the Israelis from Lebanese soil after 1990 (so as to portray the violence in south Lebanon as strictly Lebanese national resistance) and effectively banned operations by Sunni Islamists, whether Palestinian or Lebanese (for fear that battle-hardened Sunni jihadists might one day turn their guns on Damascus). The fact that the Syrians pulled out all the stops in inflaming Sunni hatred toward Israel, while allowing only Shi'as the privilege of actually fighting the Jewish state, created enormous anti-Shi'a resentment.

In order to mobilize Islamists in Ayn al-Hilwah, Shraydi's successors were forced to find an alternative form of identification that deemphasized the struggle to regain Palestine.

As Bernard Rougier explains, "they put an end to Iranian tutelage for reasons of sectarian incompatibility and reoriented the group's operations far from the Lebanese-Israeli border," while "stamping it with a salafist character it did not originally have."⁴² Toward this end, in 1994 Asbat al-Ansar invited Shahal's charitable group, Jam'iyyat al-Hidaya wal-Ihsan (Association for Guidance and Charity), to teach religious classes in the camp, effectively imbuing the group with a theological validation of its stances.

The following year, in a fairly self-evident bid to attract broader Sunni support in Lebanon, Asbat al-Ansar assassinated Ahabash leader Nizar al-Halabi. Although there is no evidence that Salafi leaders in Tripoli were informed of the audacious killing, this hardly mattered in view of their constant denunciations of the Ahabash over the years. In the weeks that followed, the Lebanese authorities arrested scores of Sunni fundamentalists in north Lebanon on charges of plotting terrorist attacks (most of them subsequently released after robust interrogation), banned Shahal's charity, and charged eight Salafists (including two members of the Shahal family) with publishing seditious material.⁴³

The heavy-handed Syrian response to the killing of Halabi—culminating in the gruesome public execution of his assassins in 1997—only served to further radicalize Lebanese Salafists and inspire them to follow Asbat's example. In 1998, a Lebanese veteran of the Afghan war, Basam Ahmad al-Kanj (aka Abu Aisha), arrived in Tripoli and began recruiting disaffected Lebanese (and some non-Lebanese Arab) Sunnis into a guerrilla force in the mountainous Dinniyeh region east of the city. On New Year's Eve 1999, a group of the militants ambushed a Lebanese army patrol that had been sent to investigate, touching off six days of fighting that left 11 soldiers and 20 rebels dead. Around 15 of the Dinniyeh militants managed to escape by boat and take refuge in Ayn al-Hilwah.

Although officials in Beirut accused Asbat and the Dinniyeh militants of seeking to establish an Islamic state, there is little evidence that either entertained such ambitions. Asbat al-Ansar focused its resources on consolidating its enclaves in Ayn al-Hilwah against encroachments by Fatah and training militants to fight abroad (mostly in Chechnya). Apart from its murder of four Lebanese judges in 1999 (in retaliation for the execution of Halabi's assassins), the closest it came to attacking the Lebanese state was shooting a policeman who tried to obstruct its January 2000 rocket attack on the Russian embassy. Asbat militants also carried out small-scale bombings of churches and bars, but most of these attacks caused only material damage and did not pose a threat to the state (if anything, they legitimized official claims about the dangers of sectarian violence if Syrian troops were to depart). Had it been otherwise, the Syrians would never have tolerated the "island of insecurity" in Ayn al-Hilwah.

The Dinniyeh crackdown simply reflected Syria's refusal to allow an armed Sunni Islamist presence to develop outside of this tiny enclave (where the comings and goings of Salafi-jihadists can be closely monitored), irrespective of its intent. Those who crossed this line disappeared into a murky "state within a state" of Syria's making, one in which Islamists were held without trial for years on end or brought before military tribunals that routinely dismiss allegations of routine torture by Lebanese and Syrian security forces.⁴⁴ Dai al-Islam al-Shahal went into hiding rather than take the risk of answering a summons.⁴⁵

Inside Ayn al-Hilwah, the Salafi-jihadist current continued to grow in strength, fueled by an influx of new external funding after the September 11 attacks. Initially, Asbat al-Ansar relied on donations funneled through Salafi charities in the camp affiliated with the imam of the al-Nur mosque in Ayn al-Hilwah, Jamal Khattab, or transported directly by al-Qa'ida couriers.⁴⁶ Increasingly, however, Asbat has

received money directly wired by supporters abroad--a simple process in Lebanon, which has one of the world's most protective bank secrecy laws and little record of investigating terrorist financing.⁴⁷ In its eagerness to draw support from the global jihadist movement, Asbat began targeting Americans in Lebanon. In addition to several bombing attacks on American commercial franchises, it is alleged to have been behind the killing of an American missionary in 2002 and a failed plot to assassinate American Ambassador Vincent Battle the following year.

As Asbat expanded, its transnational jihadist ambitions necessitated a minimal level of accommodation with the Lebanese authorities. This became evident in July 2002, when it turned over to the authorities a Dinniyeh militant who fled into the camp after killing three Lebanese soldiers who tried to apprehend him. This controversial decision led a faction of Asbat, headed by Abdallah Shraydi (the son of Hisham Shraydi), to break away and operate independently as Asbat al-Nur (which eventually dissolved after he was killed the following year). Another Salafi-jihadist faction, calling itself Jama'at al-Nur, emerged under the leadership of Ahmad al-Miqati and other Dinniyeh militants in the camp.

The Salafi-jihadists temporarily overcame their differences following the U.S.-led ouster of Saddam Hussein in 2003, as all agreed that recruiting and training operatives to fight in Iraq was the highest priority. Moreover, since the Syrians were anxious to undermine the American presence in Iraq, the Lebanese authorities were now willing to turn a blind eye to terrorist recruitment outside of Ayn al-Hilwah, and non-Salafi Islamists were eager to offer support. Scores of local volunteers were sent to Iraq,⁴⁸ a few playing important leadership roles in the Arab jihadist wing of the insurgency.⁴⁹ If the tally displayed on banners plastered throughout Tripoli is reasonably accurate, the Lebanese Sunni community's per capita contribution of "martyrs" has been rivaled only by that of the

Saudis.⁵⁰ Lebanon became a critical conduit for non-Lebanese Arab (particularly Saudi) jihadists traveling to and from Iraq--and then very quickly became a port of call for jihadists headed everywhere else under the sun.⁵¹

The participation of many Lebanese Sunni Islamists in Iraq paved the way for the emergence in Lebanon of Salafi-jihadist networks that adhere to the zealous *takfirism* (declaring other Muslims to be unbelievers) of Abu Mus'ab Zarqawi, the Jordanian-born leader of al-Qa'ida in Iraq. In 2004, dissident Asbat members and Dinniyeh militants⁵² formed a new movement calling itself Jund al-Sham (Soldiers of the Levant),⁵³ a name previously used by Zarqawi's followers before he arrived in Iraq. In a series of public statements, Jund al-Sham declared Shi'as and Christians to be "infidels."⁵⁴ By allowing jihadists to infiltrate Iraq and kill both by the thousands, however, the Syrian and Lebanese governments gained a measure of immunity for their own "infidel" constituents.

In September 2004, the Lebanese authorities carried out a wave of arrests in the predominantly Sunni town of Majdal Anjar in the Beqaa (a critical logistical hub of jihadists going to Iraq), claiming to have uncovered imminent terror attacks against the embassy of Italy and other targets in Lebanon. However, most Lebanese Sunnis were convinced that the plots were fabricated by the Syrians to deflect American pressure after the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1559 calling for a Syrian withdrawal weeks earlier. When the 35-year-old Lebanese mastermind of the plot, Isma'il Khatib, died of "heart failure" in custody, thousands of Sunnis protested in the streets of Majdal Anjar.⁵⁵

The last year of the Syrian occupation witnessed the public reemergence of Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami (Islamic Liberation Party), an international Islamist movement that defies the political/Salafi dichotomy. Although Tahrir aspires to bring about the unification of the Islamic world under a restored caliphate, it is committed to achieving this goal nonviolently

through persuasion of elites in each country. While some chapters of Tahrir in Europe and the former Soviet republics of Central Asia have been linked to violence, the Lebanese chapter has been nonviolent.⁵⁶

LEBANESE ISLAMISM AFTER THE SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL

The withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon gave Shi'a and Sunni Islamists unmitigated freedom to participate in public life for the first time in decades--at a time when public disillusionment with the political establishment was at an all-time high and parliamentary elections were just weeks away. Both took the opportunity to renegotiate their relationships with other political forces from a position of strength.

For Hizballah, the Syrian withdrawal removed the glass ceiling blocking its pursuit of absolute Shi'a political hegemony. Berri saw the writing on the wall and effectively subordinated Amal to Nasrallah, who graciously granted it equal billing on "steamroller slates" that easily swept majority Shi'a districts in the May/June 2005 parliamentary elections. Moreover, it so happened that the "March 14 coalition," led by the late Hariri's son and political heir, Sa'd, and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, needed Hizballah to defeat Michel Aoun's secular nationalist Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) in hotly-contested Christian-Druze districts with Shi'a minorities.⁵⁷ Nasrallah's price for his endorsement was continued government sanction of Hizballah's "resistance" to Israel, effectively formalizing the quid pro quo that evolved under the Syrian occupation. In order to ensure the coalition did not renege on this commitment, Hizballah joined the cabinet for the first time, with two ministers. Consequently, the new government of Prime Minister Fuad Siniora (a stand-in for Sa'd Hariri) declined to interfere with its arms shipments from Iran⁵⁸ and refused to obstruct (or even publicly criticize) its periodic cross-border raids.

The March 14 coalition also courted Sunni Islamists in its bid to defeat the FPM in mixed Sunni-Christian districts of north Lebanon, where victory hinged on mobilizing high turnout among Sunnis (which had been very low in the first round of the elections in Beirut). Having endured relentless harassment by Syrian-backed governments for years, Salafi preachers in Tripoli and Akkar suspended their traditional aversion to electoral politics and mobilized their followers to go to the polls. Preachers on the payroll of Dar al-Fatwa needed much less enticement (for obvious reasons), many of them going beyond “get out the vote” campaigning to explicitly endorse March 14. Although al-Jama’a joined most traditional Sunni politicians in boycotting the elections, few Sunnis in north Lebanon took notice, underscoring how much credibility on the street it had lost to the Salafi current.

After the elections, the newly-elected parliament rewarded the Salafists with an amnesty law that freed 26 Dinniyeh militants and seven of the Majdal Anjar detainees still in custody awaiting trial.⁵⁹ In addition, the government established a quid pro quo with Salafi-jihadists, allowing them to operate with minimal interference by the state so long as they did not carry out attacks in Lebanon itself, an arrangement openly acknowledged by pro-March 14 Lebanese and Saudi media.⁶⁰

Although the ruling coalition came under considerable outside pressure to abandon or revise these understandings, its tenuous electoral mandate gave it little room for maneuver. Any attempt to renege on the agreement with Hizballah would have led Nasrallah to declare a boycott of the government that few credible Shi’a public figures would be willing to defy. Moreover, a substantial majority of Sunnis (and significant minorities of Christians and Druze) remained supportive of Hizballah’s armed presence.⁶¹ Confronting the Salafi-jihadist current (absent a major provocation) was also untenable, as it would alienate mainstream Salafists--the segment of the Sunni community *least*

sympathetic (indeed, outright hostile) to Hizballah. In both cases, disunity within Hariri’s core Sunni constituency limited the coalition’s leverage, with severe consequences.

Hariri’s top priority has been to unify Sunni ranks under his leadership and replicate the *assabiyya* (group solidarity) of the Shi’a community, relying heavily on his massive financial resources. The charitable arm of his Future Movement began providing subsidies to poor Sunnis in many areas of the country. He reportedly lavished money on al-Jama’a, leading many of its top leaders to back the coalition publicly. The fact that the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood came out strongly against Syrian President Bashar Asad after 2005 facilitated this transition. The Siniora government legalized al-Tahrir, making Lebanon the only Arab state to do so.

During the uproar over a Danish newspaper’s publication of cartoons lampooning the Prophet Muhammad in February 2006, Hariri provided transportation for Sunnis in north Lebanon to attend a demonstration in Beirut,⁶² an initiative that backfired horribly when the protesters went on a rampage, setting fire to a building housing the Danish embassy and vandalizing two nearby churches in full view of Internal Security Forces (ISF) riot police.

The Israel-Hizballah War

Hizballah’s overriding goal after the withdrawal of Syrian forces was to preserve and legitimate its paramilitary forces. However, as international pressure for its disarmament mounted steadily, Nasrallah faced a vexing Catch-22. While avoiding major provocations against Israel would help counteract *international* pressure, a conspicuous lull threatened to fuel the growth of *domestic* pressure--not from Shi’as (who assume most of the risks incurred by the attacks and don’t strongly identify with the Palestinian struggle), but from Sunnis (who assume little risk, strongly identify with the

Palestinian struggle, and would otherwise have strong reservations about an armed Shi'a presence).

It is no accident that Hizballah's initial failure to respond to the massive upswing of Israeli-Palestinian violence in June 2006 led Zarqawi to issue a rambling tirade against the group for "raising false banners regarding the liberation of Palestine" and "stand[ing] guard against Sunnis who want to cross the border."⁶³ Nasrallah may have been chomping at the bit to join the fray, but the intensification of Salafi hostility toward Hizballah (in April 2006, the authorities arrested nine Lebanese and Palestinian Salafi-jihadists who were allegedly plotting to assassinate Nasrallah)⁶⁴ made it virtually imperative to act. Hizballah's kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers in a bloody cross-border raid on July 12, 2006 was perhaps less an act of solidarity than an attempt to upstage Palestinian Islamists and relegitimate itself in Sunni eyes.⁶⁵

The 33-day American-backed Israeli military campaign that followed was largely designed to prevent this from happening. While the Israelis presumably recognized the futility of trying to change Lebanese Shi'a public opinion by force of arms (they had been down that road before), there was clearly an expectation that targeting Lebanon's economic infrastructure would turn Sunnis (and Christians) against Hizballah. However, despite the immense destruction visited upon Lebanon, the war failed to diminish significantly support for Hizballah among Lebanese Sunnis⁶⁶ and greatly *increased* support for Hizballah among Arab Sunnis outside of Lebanon.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, the scale of destruction rendered Hizballah provocations against Israel politically unthinkable for the foreseeable future and the subsequent deployment of an expanded UNIFIL ([United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon](#)) force sealed off its access to the border. Deprived of an outlet for confronting Israel, Hizballah turned its

attention to domestic affairs after the war, forging a united opposition front with the FPM and leading a Shi'a boycott of the government. This reorientation alienated many Sunni political Islamists who had been staunch supporters of the "resistance" during the war,⁶⁸ for Hizballah was now committing the double sin of mobilizing Shi'as against a Sunni prime minister in league with secular Christians. Al-Jama'a quickly splintered, as Mawlawi and most of its senior leadership lined up behind the government, while Yakan and a substantial minority of its rank and file joined the opposition, under the umbrella group Jabhat al-Amal al-Islami (Islamic Action Front). Although the two rival factions of Tawhid (led by Minqara and Bilal Sha'ban) both reaffirmed their support for Hizballah and joined the IAF, a few former Tawhid "emirs" (e.g. Kana'an Naji) came out in support of March 14. On the other hand, Shahal and the vast majority of Salafi preachers now backed the government more firmly than ever.

The Rise of Fatah al-Islam

The March 14 coalition's struggle to preserve Sunni unity amid Lebanon's escalating postwar political crisis widened the latitude enjoyed by Salafi-jihadists, as Hariri was understandably reluctant to enter into a confrontation with fellow Sunnis. The Siniora government therefore did nothing to reverse Jund al-Sham's pre-war seizure of the neighborhood of Ta'mir adjacent to Ayn al-Hilwah or to prevent it from terrorizing the inhabitants. The militants finally allowed the army to deploy in Ta'mir only after Bahiya Hariri (Sa'd's aunt) paid them off in early 2007.⁶⁹

The Syrians exploited this weakness by allowing Arab jihadists to cross into Lebanon, most notably Shakir al-Absi, a Jordanian-Palestinian associate of Zarqawi best known for organizing the 2002 assassination of U.S. diplomat Lawrence Foley in Amman. During the summer and fall of 2006, Absi quietly recruited a small force of several dozen

militant Sunni Islamists and trained them at facilities made available by pro-Syrian Palestinian organizations. After operating underground for several months, however, his men apparently “went native” in late November 2006, seizing control of three Fatah al-Intifada compounds in the Nahr al-Barid refugee camp near Tripoli and issuing a statement denouncing the “corruption and deviation” of the sclerotic Syrian proxy and the “intelligence agencies” it serves. Calling themselves a “Palestinian national liberation movement” and adopting the moniker Fatah al-Islam, they declared a holy war to liberate Palestine.⁷⁰

While Absi presented Fatah al-Islam as an all-Palestinian movement,⁷¹ most of the hundreds of volunteers who answered his call over the next six months were Lebanese⁷² and a substantial minority were Saudis,⁷³ Syrians, and nationals of various other Arab and Islamic countries. Astonishingly, this massive expansion took place with little interference from the government.⁷⁴ Despite having been convicted in absentia for the Foley murder, Absi operated in the open, even playing host to journalists from the *New York Times* (which noted obliquely that “because of Lebanese politics” he was “largely shielded from the government”).⁷⁵

While there is little evidence to support claims by investigative journalist Seymour Hersh and others that March 14 leaders encouraged the growth of Fatah al-Islam and other *armed* Islamist groups as counterweights to Hizballah,⁷⁶ the coalition was clearly reluctant to pay the hefty political premium of confronting a well-financed and provisioned Sunni jihadist group operating within the protection of a Palestinian refugee camp. It was not until Fatah al-Islam robbed its third bank in the Tripoli area and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State David Welch visited Beirut to press the issue in May 2007 that Siniora finally sent the ISF into action with a pre-dawn raid on a Fatah al-Islam safehouse.

Siniora's failure to inform the army beforehand left Lebanese soldiers stationed outside Nahr al-Barid vulnerable to a withering reprisal hours later while most were asleep in their barracks (nine were found with their throats slit). Ironically, however, the deaths of 22 soldiers that day diminished the political expense of taking the group down by collectively horrifying the vast majority of Lebanese. Although a number of terror attacks outside the camp were carried out by sleeper cells established by Fatah al-Islam or under the direction of outsiders (culminating in the June 24 bomb attack in South Lebanon that killed six UNIFIL peacekeepers) as the army methodically isolated and destroyed Fatah al-Islam over the next three months, few Lebanese voiced objections. Even Asbat al-Ansar distanced itself from Fatah al-Islam and extinguished an abortive attempt to join the revolt by Jund al-Sham (which appears to have since disbanded and returned to the fold). Al-Qa'ida leaders abroad wisely chose not to endorse the ill-fated rebellion.

The Lebanese army's victory over Fatah al-Islam undoubtedly strengthened the coalition's leverage vis-à-vis other Salafi-jihadist groups. However, so long as the coalition relies primarily on support from the Sunni community, there will be political impediments to constraining their growth. It is telling that Dai al-Islam al-Shahal can beam with praise for Hariri⁷⁷ even as he acknowledges having met twice with Absi prior to his apocalyptic confrontation with the state.⁷⁸ There is a code of understanding among Salafists in Lebanon that accepts the formation of underground armed networks so long as they do not antagonize the authorities. Persuading them otherwise will be virtually impossible so long as Hizballah remains armed, which clearly will be the case for the foreseeable future.

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NOTES

¹ For a good overview of Lebanese Shi'a history, see Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986).

² An estimated 60 percent of the rural population of southern Lebanon had migrated into the slums of Beirut by 1975. Salim Nasr, "Roots of the Shi'i Movement," *Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP) Reports*, No. 133 (June 1985), p. 11.

³ Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, *al-Islam wa Mantiq al-Quwwa*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-jam'iyya lil-dirasa wal-nashr, 1981).

⁴ "The Iranians believe that all decisions regarding Shi'a Islam must come from Iran," Fadlallah said in 2003. *L'Orient-Le Jour* (Beirut), January 25, 2003. See Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Iran, the Vatican of Shi'ism?" *Middle East Report*, No. 233 (Winter 2004).

⁵ See Martin Kramer, "The Moral Logic of Hizballah," in Walter Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 131-57.

⁶ Martin Kramer, "Hizbullah: The Calculus of Jihad," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalisms and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 539-56.

⁷ While Fadlallah acknowledged the efficacy of suicide bombings under some circumstances, he declined to issue religious edicts explicitly sanctioning (or forbidding) them and, from the mid-1980s onward, argued that these circumstances no longer applied. He ruled that hijackings and kidnappings of innocents are always "inhumane and irreligious." Kramer, "The Moral Logic of Hizballah."

⁸ Hezbollah bitterly contested Syria's 1987 occupation of west Beirut, prompting the Syrians to execute 23 of its fighters in retaliation, upon which it organized one of the

largest anti-Syrian demonstrations of the war. See "7,000 Shia Mourners Call for Revenge," *The Times* (London), February 26, 1987. It also allowed "large amounts of vital materials" to pass through its stronghold in the southern suburbs of Beirut to Gen. Michel Aoun's besieged Lebanese army units during his 1989-1990 rebellion against Syrian forces. See "Syria Summons Druze Leader over Disputes in Pro-Syrian Camp," *United Press International (UPI)*, October 9, 1990.

⁹ It is important to bear in mind that few Shi'as held favorable views of Syria during this period. A 1987 survey of Shi'a college students found that more blamed Syria for Lebanon's civil war than Israel or the United States. See Hilal Khashan, "Do Lebanese Shi'is Hate the West?" *Orbis*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (1989), pp. 583-90.

¹⁰ See Nizar Hamzeh, "Lebanon's Hizballah: From Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1993), pp.321-37.

¹¹ While Hezbollah was free to criticize such inequities, it was not allowed to mobilize the Shi'a community in ways that might undermine political stability of occupied Lebanon (e.g. by organizing mass protests or openly coordinating with the Christian opposition). When Tufayli split from the movement to lead a "revolution of the hungry" in the late 1990s, his followers were hunted down by Lebanese army troops.

¹² During the 2000 elections, one Hezbollah candidate estimated that the party would have won 20 seats (twice its allotment) had it been allowed to run head to head against Amal. See "Victorious Hezbollah Faces Compulsory Alliances," *UPI*, September 2, 2000.

¹³ See Gary C. Gambill, "Syrian Workers in Lebanon: The Other Occupation," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (February 2001), http://www.meib.org/articles/0102_11.htm.

¹⁴ See Gary C. Gambill, Lebanese Farmers and the Syrian Occupation, *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 5, No. 10 (October 2003), http://www.meib.org/articles/0310_11.htm.

¹⁵ Although there are few reliable statistics on this, according to the World Bank "income inequality is generally believed to have increased" during the 1990s. See World Bank, *Lebanon: Country Brief* (Washington, DC: World Bank, September 2005), <http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/mna/mena.nsf/Countries/Lebanon/DD01F4FEEFA05C2A85256CC9006C6A80?OpenDocument>.

¹⁶ See Blanca Madani, "Hezbollah's Global Finance Network: The Triple Frontier," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (January 2002), http://www.meib.org/articles/0201_12.htm.

"Hezbollah and the West African Diamond Trade," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 6, No. 6-7 (June/July 2004), http://www.meib.org/articles/0407_12.htm.

¹⁷ "We believe the requirement for an Islamic state is to have an overwhelming popular desire, and we're not talking about fifty percent plus one, but a large majority. And this is not available in Lebanon and probably never will be," Nasrallah said in 2004. See Adam Shatz, "In Search of Hezbollah," *New York Review of Books*, April 29, 2004.

¹⁸ See May Chartouni-Dubarry, "Hizballah: From Militia to Political Party," in R. Hollis and N. Shebadi (eds.), *Lebanon on Hold: Implications for Middle East Peace* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996), pp.59-62.

¹⁹ In 1993, for example, Robert Fisk published an article entitled "Hizballah Vows Peace When the Troops Pull Out" on the basis of Nasrallah having told him the group would "close the file concerning the occupation of Lebanese land" after an Israeli withdrawal (he did not say whether there were other files and Fisk did not ask). See Robert Fisk, "Hizballah Vows Peace When the Troops Pull Out: 'Party of God' Will Concentrate on Lebanese Politics and Leave Palestinians to Fight Own Battles, Leader Tells Robert Fisk in Beirut," *The Independent* (London), November 10, 1993.

²⁰ See, for example, Augustus Richard Norton, "Hizbullah: from Radicalism to Pragmatism," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (January 1998).

²¹ Judith Palmer Harik, "Between Islam and the System: Sources and Implications of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hizballah," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (March 1996), pp. 41-67.

²² The Syrians underscored this shortly after the Israeli withdrawal by calling a halt to President Emile Lahoud's anti-corruption campaign, facilitating Hariri's return to office after a two-year hiatus, and manipulating Shi'a electoral lists in the Fall 2000 elections.

²³ According to Emile al-Hokayem, there has been a rift within Hezbollah "between a powerful core committed to permanent resistance and the mid-level political cadre willing to focus exclusively on political participation." See Emile al-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria: Outgrowing the Proxy Relationship," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Spring 2007).

²⁴ See Avi Jorisch, *Beacon of Hatred: Inside Hizballah's Al-Manar Television*, (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2004).

²⁵ Seymour Hersh, "The Syrian Bet," *New Yorker*, July 28, 2003; Adam Shatz, "In Search of Hezbollah," *New York Review of Books*, April 29, 2004.

²⁶ After being fired as director of al-Manar TV in 2003, Nayef Krayem wrote in a public reply that he had been unjustly accused of "being with Fadlallah." In August 2004, Hezbollah activists broke into a mosque controlled by followers of Fadlallah and plastered posters of Khamene'i inside. *Al-Nahar* (Beirut), May 12, 2003; *al-Balad* (Beirut), August 23, 2004.

²⁷ Vali Nasr, *The Shiite Revival: How Conflicts Within Islam Will Shape the Future* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), p. 68.

²⁸ Members of four prominent Sunni families (Sulh, Karamah, Yafi, and Salam) held the premiership in 40 of the 53 Lebanese cabinets that served from 1943 to 1982. See Samir Khalaf, *Lebanon's Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 106.

²⁹ For example, Grand Mufti Hasan Khalid, considered a Nasserist before the war, could be found supporting the American-backed government of Amine Gemayel in 1983, only

to express support for an Islamic state after west Beirut fell out of government control in early 1984. See "Beirut Christians Fearful of Shift To Moslem Rule," *Washington Post*, March 12, 1984.

³⁰ *Al-Diyar* (Beirut), August 31, 1989.

³¹ "Fighting at Nahr al-Bared Splits Tripoli into Two Camps," *The Daily Star*, July 3, 2007.

³² Kurt Mendenhall, "Syria's Ongoing Lebanese Adventure," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, August 1988, p. 9.

³³ Key Sunni figures believed to have been assassinated on orders from Syria include Shaykh Subhi Salih, deputy chairman of the Supreme Islamic Council (1986); Muhammad Shukayr, political adviser to then President Amine Gemayel (1987); Grand Mufti Hasan Khalid (1989); and MP Nazim Qadri (1989).

³⁴ Hilal Khashan, "The Lebanese State: Lebanese Unity and the Sunni Muslim Position," *International Sociology*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1992), p. 93.

³⁵ A. Nizar Hamzeh and R. Hrair Dekmejian, "A Sufi Response to Political Islamism: Al-Ahbash of Lebanon," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (May 1996), pp. 217-29.

³⁶ When Lebanon's Council of Maronite Bishops openly called for the withdrawal of Syrian forces in the fall of 2000, the Akkar Ulama accused it of "instigating fanaticism and strife." See "Orthodox Patriarch Defends Bkirki," *The Daily Star* (Beirut), October 4, 2000.

³⁷ When the Council of Maronite Archbishops issued a historic statement calling for a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in September 2000, Qabbani issued a statement expressing "astonishment" and praising "sisterly Syria" for its "big sacrifices to safeguard Lebanon's unity and maintain its security and stability." *Al-Safir* (Beirut), September 21, 2000.

³⁸ A. Nizar Hamzeh, "Lebanon's Islamists and Local Politics: A New Reality," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 5 (2000), pp. 739-59. Hizballah's platform contained not a hint of Islamic influence.

³⁹ "Lyrical Liberties?" *al-Ahram Weekly*, No.

14-20 (October 1999); "Khalife Song Not an Insult to Islam: Fadlallah," Agence France Presse (AFP), October 4, 1999. In 1994, Dar al-Fatwa banned the compilation of articles by the recently deceased Libyan writer (and fierce critic of Islamic orthodoxy) Sadiq al-Nayhum. See Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 156.

⁴⁰ Al-Arabiya TV, April 13, 2007. Translation by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Worldwide Monitoring.

⁴¹ For more on Salafists outside of north Lebanon, see Bilal Y. Saab and Magnus Ranstorp, "Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 30, No. 10 (2007), pp. 825-55.

⁴² Bernard Rougier, *Everyday Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam among Palestinians in Lebanon*, translated by Pascale Ghazaleh (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 49, 85.

⁴³ "Two Moslem Fundamentalist Charity Groups Banned," AFP, January 4, 1996.

⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch, "Lebanon: Torture and Unfair Trial of the Dhinniyah Detainees," May 7, 2003, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmdel180052003>.

⁴⁵ *Al-Safir* (Beirut), February 8, 2003.

⁴⁶ A key figure in this regard (until his assassination in 2003, apparently by Israel) was Abd al-Sattar al-Jad (widely known as Abu Muhammad al-Masri), an Egyptian al-Qa'ida operative who arrived at the camp in the mid-1990s.

⁴⁷ For example, a foiled plot to assassinate U.S. Ambassador Vincent Battle was allegedly financed by the Lebanese-born head of Australia's Islamic Youth Movement, Bilal Ghazal. See "The Baggage of Bilal Khazal," *Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia), June 4, 2004. For their alleged links to Asbat al-Ansar, see "Clashes Leave Fatah in Poor Position," *The Daily Star*, May 22, 2003.

⁴⁸ By November 2004, according to the London-based Arabic daily *al-Hayat*, "dozens" of Lebanese Sunnis and "tens" of Palestinians from Lebanese refugee camps

were fighting in Iraq. Lebanese killed in Iraq included two residents of al-Qara'un (Fadi Ghaith and Omar Darwish), two from Majdal Anjar (Ali al-Khatib and Hasan Sawwan), and "several" from the predominantly Sunni cities of Sidon and Tripoli. The report also mentioned the deaths of Palestinians Muhammad Farran and the son of Ansarallah leader Jamal Sulayman. See *al-Hayat* (London), November 8, 2004.

⁴⁹ One of earliest Lebanese arrivals, Mustapha Darwish Ramadan (aka Abu Muhammad al-Lubnani), was said to have been the "right-hand man of Zarqawi" until his death in a September 2004 American air strike. See *al-Rai al-Aam* (Kuwait), September 20, 2004; "Smoke of Iraq War 'Drifting Over Lebanon,'" *Washington Post*, June 12, 2006.

⁵⁰ The number reached 50 during the summer of 2006. See "Lebanese Salute Their 'Martyrs' in Iraq War," *The Independent* (London), July 7, 2006.

⁵¹ Two members of the Algerian terrorist group Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC) arrested by French police in 2005 were found to have received explosives training at a camp near Tripoli. See Emily Hunt, "Can al-Qaeda's Lebanese Expansion Be Stopped?" *PolicyWatch*, No. 1076 (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 6, 2006).

⁵² Although nominally founded by prominent preacher Muhammad Sharqiya (aka Abu Yusuf), the main decision-makers were Abu Ramiz al-Sahmarani (aka Abu-Ramiz al-Tarabulsi), a prominent Dinniyeh militant, and Imad Yasin, a former Asbat commander who had gained notoriety for instigating a shootout with Hamas in 2002.

⁵³ The Arabic word *al-Sham* literally means "the north." In early Islamic history, it was used to refer to lands north of the Arabian Peninsula, including present-day Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. *Jund al-Sham* is sometimes translated as "soldiers of Greater Syria."

⁵⁴ *Al-Nahar* (Beirut), June 26, 2004; *al-Safir* (Beirut), July 14, 2004.

⁵⁵ "Uproar over Lebanon Custody Death," BBC, September 28, 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3698028.stm.

⁵⁶ The only notable exception was its 1985 kidnapping of four Soviet diplomats (one of whom was executed while in custody), an act of desperation intended to halt the Syrian siege of Tripoli. Current Tahrir leaders disavow involvement.

⁵⁷ As the *New York Times* noted, "the endorsement of the Shi'a Hezbollah party was critical" in Ba'abda-Aley, where the number of Shi'a voters was substantially larger than the March 14 coalition's margin of victory. See "Returning Lebanese General Stuns Anti-Syria Alliance," *New York Times*, June 14, 2005. Hizballah's endorsement was also a factor in north Lebanon, as it eroded the ability of rival Sunni politicians to mobilize the Arab nationalist current against the Hariri family.

⁵⁸ In April 2006, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned in a report to the Security Council that the Lebanese Army has "not been authorized to prevent further movement of the ammunitions" from Syria to Hizballah bases in Lebanon. See Third Semi-Annual Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004), April 19, 2006, <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/361eea1cc08301c485256cf600606959/abf843295c78f7f18525715e00657ba9!OpenDocument>.

⁵⁹ "Beirut Clashes Follow Geagea Amnesty," Aljazeera.net, July 20, 2005, <http://english.aljazeera.net/English/archive/archive?ArchiveId=13568>.

⁶⁰ Hariri's newspaper, *al-Mustaqbal*, acknowledged that al-Qa'ida "has benefited from Lebanon as a transit point for individuals and logistics headed to Iraq or other Arab countries" and therefore "has not used Lebanon as an arena for confrontation." See *al-Mustaqbal* (Beirut), January 8, 2006. Translation by BBC Worldwide Monitoring; Hazim al-Amin writes in *al-Hayat*: "Al-Qaeda benefits from Lebanon as a human and

financial transit point that does not tighten its surveillance and search measures at its airports and facilities. If Lebanon is turned into a target because of a decision by al-Qaeda, it will become an area of difficulty.... There are some aspects of al-Qaeda's presence in Lebanon to which a blind eye is turned in a sense.... While most of the region's countries have doubled the financial and commercial supervision of activities linked to suspected Islamic organizations, Lebanon has not adopted any such measures. Unlike many other countries, it has not imposed special procedures for the transfer of funds through it. See *al-Hayat* (London), August 27, 2006.

⁶¹ Graham E. Fuller, "The Hizballah-Iran Connection: Model for Sunni Resistance," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Winter 2006-2007), p. 147.

⁶² "The Hariri group bussed many groups in from Akkar," according to American University of Beirut professor Hilal Khashan. Quoted in "Lebanon's New War," *al-Ahram Weekly*, No. 24-30 (May 2007).

⁶³ "Hezbollah, al-Qaida Mirror Islamic Split," The Associated Press, June 24, 2006.

⁶⁴ *Al-Diyar* (Beirut), April 13, 2006; "Shia of Lebanon Emerge from Poverty to Face Charges of Overstepping Their Powers," *Financial Times*, May 5, 2006.

⁶⁵ In fact, there has long been an undercurrent of tension between Hamas and Hizballah for this very reason. Hizballah's resumption of hostilities with Israel after the start of the 2000-2005 intifada led to a public rift between the two groups that lasted throughout much of 2001 (though this was partly due to Hizballah's attempts to recruit Palestinian terror cells directly). See "The Terror Twins," *Time*, April 30, 2001.

⁶⁶ According to an Ipsos survey conducted at the end of the war, 84 percent of Shi'as and 46 percent of Sunnis believed that Hizballah "should keep its weapons," while only 21 percent of Druze and 23 percent of Christians believed it should. See *L'Orient-Le Jour* (Beirut), August 28, 2006.

⁶⁷ A November 2006 survey of six Arab countries by Shibley Telhami and Zogby

International found that Nasrallah was the most popular choice among respondents in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates when asked to name the world leader outside their own countries they admired most (Lebanese respondents had to choose a non-Lebanese figure; he finished second among Saudi respondents. See "U.S., Israel 'Biggest Threat' to Arabs, Poll Finds," Inter Press Service, February 8, 2007; Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, "What the Moderate Arab World is," *al-Ahram Weekly*, No. 26 (April- May 2007). Data for the poll is available at: <http://brookings.edu/views/speeches/telhami20070208.pdf>.

⁶⁸ "Hezbollah is waging a struggle against its own self-interests. Its real cause is and should remain the resistance," said al-Jama'a Deputy Secretary-General Ibrahim al-Masri after Hizballah and the FPM organized two massive demonstrations against the government in early December 2006. See "Lebanon at a Tripwire," *International Crisis Group Middle East Briefing*, No. 20 (December 21, 2006), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4586>

⁶⁹ Michael Young, "Destruction and Deceit in North Lebanon," *The Daily Star* (Beirut), May 24, 2007.

⁷⁰ *Al-Safir* (Beirut), November 28, 2006.

⁷¹ *Al-Diyar* (Beirut), February 20, 2007.

⁷² This was confirmed definitively by the identification of militants captured and killed in the recent violence. Of 20 Fatah al-Islam members who appeared before a military court on May 30, 2007, 19 were Lebanese. See National News Agency, May 30, 2007.

⁷³ Of 25 militants whose bodies had been recovered by the Lebanese authorities as of May 26, 2007, four were identified as Saudis, according to the Saudi ambassador in Lebanon. See *al-Hayat* (London), May 27, 2007.

⁷⁴ Although Lebanese troops imposed a tight blockade of the camp in March 2007, eyewitnesses in the camp said that a large shipment of weapons arrived in early May. See *al-Hayat* (London), May 27, 2007. Officials of the UN Relief and Works Agency

(UNWRA) later expressed astonishment that such a large influx of men and material went undetected by either the Lebanese government's surveillance of the camp or the mainstream Palestinian militias inside that liaison with the authorities. "Somebody hasn't been doing their job," UNWRA Commissioner-General Karen Koning Abu Zayd told the *Washington Times*. See "UN Agency Knew of Armed Foreigners in Lebanon Camp," *Washington Times*, May 24, 2007.

⁷⁵ "A New Face of Jihad Vows Attacks on U.S.," *New York Times*, March 16, 2007.

⁷⁶ Seymour M. Hersh, "The Redirection: Does the New Policy Benefit the Real Enemy?" *New Yorker*, March 5, 2007.

⁷⁷ "There's a relationship between ourselves and Sheikh Saad [Hariri] when it's needed," Dai al-Islam al-Shahal told the *Washington Post* in June 2007. "The biggest Sunni political power is Hariri. The biggest Sunni religious power are the Salafis. So it's natural." See "Radical Group Pulls in Sunnis As Lebanon's Muslims Polarize," *Washington Post*, June 17, 2007, p. A16.

⁷⁸ *Al-Hayat* (London), May 22, 2007.