

# Filling the Void: Hizbullah's State Building in Lebanon

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*This work is my own, and where any part of this work is not my own, I have indicated this by acknowledging the source of that part or those parts of my work.*

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## Abstract

Hizbullah is a militarised sub-state group that challenges Lebanon's authority by establishing a parallel power-structure within the state. This thesis argues that the failure of the Lebanese government to provide for its citizens, particularly the disenfranchised Shiite population, has allowed Hizbullah to fill the void of Lebanon's absent government by creating a parallel state-like structure. Hizbullah's state building is driven by domestic politics, as it strives to "democratically" restructure the political system in its favour rather than take the state by force. Hizbullah occupies a political, social and military position within Lebanon that extends far beyond any traditional definition of a sub-state group. In analysing Hizbullah as a state-building movement, this thesis will shed light on the organisation's autonomy, strength and objectives in Lebanon and also provide a holistic approach to further study of militarised sub-state groups.

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# Introduction

*“When we build a strong, capable, and just state that protects Lebanon and the Lebanese, it will be easy to find an honourable solution to the question of the resistance and its weapons”*

Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, September 22, 2006

The post-war decolonisation period, the end of the Cold War, and the effects of globalisation have led to the weakening of political authority in many states in the developing world. Many of these states have been classified as “quasi” (Jackson 1990), “weak” (Migdal 1988), “failed” or “collapsed” (Rotberg 2004), and are the primary locales for instability in the modern world. The contemporary security environment is dominated by internal struggles for power, where ethnic, religious, or secessionist groups use “unconventional warfare” to challenge state sovereignty (Ayoob, 1995: 27). The proxies of the great powers during the Cold War were provided with international recognition and the financial means to enhance their formal status as sovereign states. Yet globalising influences of the post-Cold War world (such as neo-liberal economic adjustments and transnational networks) have undermined the “propped up” sovereignty of new states while empowering militarised sub-state rivals (Kingston, 2004: 2-3). Consequently, the present era of globalisation has tipped the balance in favour of armed sub-state groups’ challenge to state authority and has profoundly altered the modern security environment.

Understanding the nature of militarised sub-state groups within weak states has important theoretical and empirical significance for conceptualising the modern state and the contemporary security environment. A dozen countries on the 2007 Failed State

Index contain “state-within-states”; areas that are essentially self-governed by sub-state groups but are within the borders of the sovereign state. In the former Soviet republic of Georgia, the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have built parallel governing structures. Both regions are heavily supported by Russian security forces and economic aid, and continue to reject the Georgian state's authority (Failed States Index 2007: 56). In Columbia, the narco-terrorist insurgency movement *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Columbia* (FARC) controls a large swath of territory and provides basic social services and security to people living outside Bogota's reach (Bejarano & Pizarro 2004: 99-118). These “state-building movements” pose a significant problem for international relations theory. The state-centric approach of much of international relations theory ignores the significance of armed sub-state groups - particularly those with state building characteristics - and prevents a thorough understanding of the modern security environment.

The Islamist organisation in Lebanon, Hizbullah, exemplifies this problem. The organisation has been described as “the key to peace and tranquility in the Middle East” (Zisser, 2002: 10) - and yet it is not a state. It is the strongest external force that challenges the sovereignty and security of Israel; it is a key target of the USA's “war on terror”; it is a primary player in the empowerment of the Shiite in Lebanon and beyond; and it is the most militarily powerful (and therefore threatening) political party in multi-confessional Lebanon. Hizbullah also provides much-needed services, infrastructure, employment, and political representation to the Shiite community in Lebanon. Hizbullah therefore has certain state-like features, such as the monopoly over the means of coercion, infrastructure, and administration, but it is also missing key characteristics,

such as mandatory taxation<sup>1</sup>. The paradox between the “stateness” (Nettl, 1968) of Hizbullah and its position as an armed sub-state group poses a significant puzzle for international relations. Hizbullah has established a parallel state-structure, and yet it has not attempted to violently take over or separate from the state. Why then is Hizbullah asserting its authority and autonomy in the south of Lebanon and what are its ultimate aims?

Many theorists have tried to answer these questions by analyzing Hizbullah's military capacity (particularly in reference to its resistance to Israel) or the social function of its Islamic character. By focussing on the means and tactics of Hizbullah's militancy, the organisation can only be viewed as an insurgent group that aims to either take over or separate from the Lebanese state. This paradigmatic view of Hizbullah concludes that the Lebanese government's mediocre military capabilities and the absence of government institutions in much of Shiite-dominated areas would provide favorable conditions for Hizbullah to launch an attack on the state (Fearon & Laitin, 2003: 80). This has not occurred, however, which indicates that Hizbullah do not “fit” into insurgent group theory.

Other theorists (Hamzeh, 2004; Harik, 1996) examine Hizbullah's social programs and service provision to gain understanding of one of its main sources of power - its support base. The failure of many states in the developing world to provide security or prosperity to its citizens has led resource mobilisation theorists to examine the material benefits of social mobilisation (McCarthy & Zald, 1977: 1216). Backed by Iranian financial and material assistance, Hizbullah has constructed a complete social-welfare

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<sup>1</sup> Generous funding from Iran shields Hizbullah from the state-like requirement of providing services in order to extract capital to fund war-making (Tilly, 1990). Accordingly, Hizbullah provides services as a method of maintaining support for its conflict with Israel and to legitimise its autonomy in the south.

system to provide for its constituents. These services have contributed to the popularity of the group, and have allowed it to skillfully penetrate Lebanon's Shiite community (Hamzeh, 2004: 53-54). This paradigmatic view of Hizbullah provides the flip-side of Hizbullah's military and insurgent character. However, both fields of existing literature are inclined to focus on one aspect of the group at the exclusion of the other. Hizbullah's military identity was fundamental in its early years, however the group has recently shifted its focus from external militancy to grassroots state building and the insurgent group approach is not longer accurate. The civil society approach places too much emphasis on Hizbullah's social function without recognizing the centrality of its militant identity. Consequently, this literature only provides a narrow depiction of the organisation and offers little understanding of its overall objectives in Lebanon.

My analysis of Hizbullah overcomes the inherent weakness in existing literature by viewing the group's coercive, social, and political characteristics holistically. I propose that Hizbullah has not attempted to seize power from the state forcibly because it is undertaking a process of state building. Similar to the development of state entities in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe (Tilly 1985, 1990), an organic process of centralising control, monopolising the means of coercion, and establishing a symbiotic relationship with the populace (in terms of taxation and service provision) is now occurring with some sub-state groups inside new states (Ayoob, 1995). In other words, sub-state groups are not just challenging state authority (as insurgent theory suggests) but are muscling-in on state resources and gaining domestic legitimacy by creating a viable alternative to the existing state. By creating a parallel state structure that fills the void left of the ineffective Lebanese state, Hizbullah can attract supporters, increase its political weight in the country, and effectively "capture" the state from the inside rather than taking it by



force. The European state building experience has shown that organic state formation leads to the disappearance of some states and the survival of others (Tilly, 1975: 78-81). I argue that internal state-building movements such as Hizbullah may trump the authority of the Lebanese government and become the stronger state-like entity within Lebanese borders.

This theoretical framework allows me to construct a comprehensive analysis of Hizbullah's state building in Lebanon. Sub-state groups that develop state-like characteristics do so to either offer protection against a hostile government (which may be external or the central government itself) or alternatively, to meet the social needs of individuals (Spears, 2004: 27). Hizbullah has established state-like institutions to: a) provide protection from hostile Israeli forces, b) to advocate the needs of the disenfranchised Shiites, and c) expand its power and influence in Lebanon. In other words, Hizbullah's state development is the result of domestic politics.

To address the puzzle of Hizbullah's state building in Lebanon, I will tease out the theoretical and empirical aspects of militarised sub-state groups, state building, and Hizbullah itself. Accordingly, this study is divided into three parts. First I provide the theoretical approach that underpins my argument: examining a) the early state making process that led to the establishment of the modern sovereign state; b) weak states in the international system; and c) the significance of sub-state groups. This chapter examines the differences between the "organic" old states of Europe and the "imposed" state structures in the developing world, and the vulnerability of new states to internal challenges. Second, I investigate the inherent weaknesses in the Lebanese state structure that have allowed Hizbullah to carve a space for itself and establish a parallel state-like

structure. I then explore Hizbullah's empirical statehood by analyzing its external and internal expressions of state building. Finally, I discuss Hizbullah's objectives in Lebanon and how its state building process helps or hinders this goal. This section will provide a holistic analysis of both the process of Hizbullah's state making, its relationship with the state, and the constraints Hizbullah faces when achieving its political goals. In sum, I will provide a comprehensive analysis of Hizbullah as a state-building movement within the borders of the weak Lebanese state.

# ■ 1 ■

## Studying Hizbullah: Assumptions and Approaches

**T**he Party of God, or Hizbullah, was trained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard in 1982, and found its *raison d'être* in its resistance to Israeli occupation (1982-2000). At the conclusion of the civil war (1975-1990), Hizbullah was exempt from disarming its militia force (all other militias were forced to disarm as part of the Ta'if Accord), and became the primary line of defence against Israeli occupation. Since the first post-war elections in 1992, Hizbullah has been part of the Lebanese political scene, with elected members in both municipal and national governments, and currently fields two out of twenty-four members in the Lebanese Cabinet (Shanahan, 2005). Hizbullah is also the main provider of essential services to war-ravaged areas across Lebanon. The organisation provides medical, financial, and housing facilities to its overwhelmingly Shiite followers, as well as maintaining hospitals, civil defence centres, and supermarkets. Hizbullah also owns and runs three major media outlets – *al-Manar* television, *al-Nur* radio, and *al-Intiqad* newspaper, which are accessible throughout the Middle East (Saouli, 2003: 6). These institutions, among others, employ thousands of people in regions of Lebanon that have poor employment opportunities and limited prosperity.

### **The Insurgent Group Approach**

One of the primary paradigmatic lenses through which to view Hizbullah is as an insurgent group. The Political Opportunity Structure school of social movement theory suggests that an oppressed peoples' ability or willingness to mobilise is dependent on how open the political system is to challenge (McAdam, 1982: 48-51). In other words, an

insurgent group's chance of success (defined as changing the status quo in favour of the challenger) is dependent on the strength of the state's policing and military capabilities and the reach of government institutions into rural areas (Fearon & Laitin, 2003: 80). The Lebanese government's mediocre military capabilities and the absence of government institutions and authority in south Lebanon would thus provide favorable conditions for Hizbullah to launch a successful attack on the state. Nevertheless, Hizbullah has restricted its military activities to its external conflict with Israel and has not challenged the Lebanese state directly (Berkovich, 2006).

Literature based on this approach tends to focus on Hizbullah's military capabilities and foreign policy orientations, particularly its conflict with Israel. This approach was relevant and important when examining Hizbullah's early years, when the organisation's primary concern was its coercive ability and its resistance to Israel. However, Hizbullah has since then evolved and shifted its prime objectives to the domestic realm. Focussing on the means and tactics of Hizbullah's militancy overlooks the organisation's political and social characteristics and more importantly, its complex role in the domestic sphere. This theoretical approach therefore no longer provides a complete framework from which to understand the group.

### **The Civil Society Approach**

The literature that focuses on the civil society approach, examining Hizbullah's social programs and service provision, offers the flip-side to work on Hizbullah's militancy. The failure of many Middle Eastern states (as well as states throughout the developing world) to provide security or prosperity to citizens has led resource mobilisation theorists to examine the material base of social mobilisation. In this regard, the appeal of social

movements such as Hizbullah may not be based on grievances (Gurr 1970) but on the presumed benefits the mobilisation can provide, such as political representation and a higher quality of life (McCarthy & Zald, 1977: 1216). However, these benefits have some cost; including military service, loyalty, political and allegiance (Zubaida, 1992: 4).

There is some evidence to support this approach. Backed by Iranian financial and material assistance, Hizbullah has constructed a complete social-welfare system to provide for its constituents. These services have contributed to the popularity of the group, boosted the size of its constituency, and allowed it to skillfully penetrate Lebanon's Shiite community (Hamzeh, 2004: 53-54). A survey conducted in 1993 found that forty-four percent of Shiites sampled of *high* socio-economic status indicated affiliation with Hizbullah, while fifty-three percent of those in the medium and forty-seven percent of the low category were also Party of God followers (Harik, 1996: 53-54). The fact that Hizbullah helps people lead the "good life" by providing social infrastructure and public services is a fundamental motivation for its support. However, the civil society approach primarily focuses on the communal interests of the Shiites and disregards the interdependent relationship between Hizbullah's military and social character. Although it has shifted its focus to the domestic realm since the end of the civil war, Hizbullah has never lost sight of its foreign policy and military objectives. Therefore, resource mobilisation theory alone cannot explain Hizbullah's evolution from a social movement to a state-building movement.

### **The Holistic Approach to Understanding Hizbullah**

Insurgent group and civil society approaches tend to view Hizbullah in isolation to the Lebanese state, often exclude one or more "sides" of Hizbullah's complex character, and

do not explain the organisation's role in Lebanon today or its future objectives. Assessing the "gaps" in these narrow approaches raises two important questions: (1) if Hizbullah is capable of taking Lebanon by force and has the opportunity to do so, why does it restrict its coercive/military activities to an external enemy (namely, Israel); and (2), if Hizbullah has the means to be an autonomous political, social, and military entity why does it maintain political relations with the Lebanese state? I propose that the answers to these questions lie in state making literature and in viewing Hizbullah as a state-building movement.

State building literature provides the most useful theoretical foundation for this approach. In the state making process from 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe, domestic instability was caused by internal struggles for power - where some political entities survived at the cost of many others (Tilly 1975: 84). A similar process is now occurring in weak or failed states in the developing world (cf. Ayoub 1995). Transposing the Westphalian state system onto new states did not create stability but sowed the seeds of chaos, and in some cases, destruction. The internal struggles between sub-state groups and the "legitimate" (but often imposed and unrepresentative) authority are indicative of a process of *organic* or *natural* state formation demonstrated by the European experience. There are, however, significant differences between modern and European state formation; notably the compressed time frame of development, the strength of the international state system and the "idea" of the state (Buzan 1991), and finally, the influence of external actors on the outcomes of domestic struggles. Nevertheless, I argue that internal state-building movements, such as Hizbullah, are substituting the weak and unrepresentative state by establishing parallel state-like structures.

I hypothesize that Hizbullah is going through a state building process inside Lebanon that is undermining the authority and legitimacy of the Lebanese state. Lebanon has oscillated between failure, collapse, and weakness since its inception in 1920, due to the power-sharing system of government that institutionalised sectarianism (Shanahan, 2006: Ch 2). The subsequent disenfranchisement of the politically weak Shiite community has led the Shiites to transfer allegiance from the national government to Hizbullah. The Islamic organisation has replaced the state in terms of the monopoly of the means of coercion, service provision, infrastructure, and most importantly, legitimacy, in the Shiite-dominated regions. I argue that this process is a state building enterprise that is stimulated by *need* – that is, to fill the void left by the absent state. The strength of the “idea” of the state and regional circumstances has influenced Hizbullah’s strategy in Lebanon, but the primary cause of its state building is rooted in domestic politics. Hizbullah is therefore challenging the state by “showing up” the state’s incompetence and creating a parallel power-base.

I have deliberately focused this analysis on the domestic causes of Hizbullah’s state building, rather than the regional (external) or religious, because there is an overemphasis on the latter aspects of the group in much of the literature. Many scholars attribute Hizbullah’s behaviour as a response to the regional environment (Saouli, 2006; Khalili, 2007; Zisser, 2006), yet the role of Iran and Syria have become less integral to Hizbullah’s foreign policy as the organisation’s state building has strengthened. The external expressions of statehood (namely its conflict with Israel) provide Hizbullah with the legitimacy for its monopoly of coercion, but it is primarily a Lebanese political entity with Lebanese needs and goals. The religious elements of Hizbullah’s role in Lebanon accounts for its Shiite identity (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002), but I do not deal with this issue in

depth because the organisation has been forced to temper its religious conservatism to cater for the secularised Lebanese community (Harik, 1996: 65). As I will illustrate, domestic politics are the driving force behind Hizbullah's strategy and objectives in Lebanon.

## **Definition of Terms**

An analysis of Hizbullah's state building in Lebanon must begin with an explanation of the terms "militarised sub-state groups" and "state-building movements". Sub-state groups are units inside state borders that operate beyond state control and challenge state authority (Holmqvist, 2005). Sub-state groups are *below* the state but still part of the state entity - they require the resources of the state to survive, including, support from the population, capital, and territory (Kingston, 2004: 2). This thesis deals with militarised groups, as the monopoly of coercion is a central component of state-building movements. When I discuss *coercion*, I am referring to both the military aspects of violence (in terms of guerrilla warfare, attacks, kidnappings and other military tactics) and the inherent *threat* of a militia or army that is outside the control of the governing state.

I refer to Hizbullah as a "state-building movement" to emphasize the centrality of domestic politics in its strategy and to focus on the *process* of state building. Alternative definitions of such groups, including "state-within-states" (Spears, 2004), "de facto states" (Pegg, 2004), "proto-states" or "states-in-the-making" (Benjarano & Pizarro, 2004: 107), implicitly imply the sub-state group's objective - which is commonly restricted to secession or sovereignty. I argue that these objectives are not necessarily a factor of Hizbullah's state building and I therefore refrain from using those terms. Jagers (1992) offers a good working definition of state building. According to him:



State building can be usefully defined as the state's ability to accumulate power. State building is the process by which the state not only grows in economic productivity and government coercion but, also, in political and institutional power. More precisely, in the power of state elites to overcome environmental, social, and political forces which stand in the way of their policy objectives (1992: 27).

This definition refers to the state, but I apply the same concepts to a militarised sub-state group. The important element of this definition is the accumulation of *power*, which according to Jagers, has three distinct "faces": "(a) power as national capabilities; (b) power as political capacity; and (c) power as institutional coherence" (Jagers, 1992: 27). When I refer to state power (or increasing power in the state), I am implicitly referring to these three components.

Another term that must be defined is "new states". I refer to new states in the context of modern state formation and the inherent instability they often suffer. I define "new" states as those formed during the decolonisation period. This includes the Middle East and Asia (1940-1959), Africa (1960-1966), and the former Soviet republics (1990s) (Sadowski, 1998: 177-179). These states are predominantly located in the developing world, which is also known as the Third World. I use the terms new states, Third World, and the developing world interchangeably.

## **Methodology**

This thesis will test the hypothesis that Hizbullah is a state-building movement that aims to improve its power and status in Lebanon rather than separate from or take over the state. Two main research questions are covered. First, what characteristics are present that confirm Hizbullah is a state-building movement? Second, why is it taking the (arguably longer) path of state building to obtain power and status in Lebanon? I study Hizbullah in an attempt to shed new light on the clandestine group. As discussed earlier,

Hizbullah is an important player in the region and its actions have domestic, regional, and arguably international implications. It is a fundamental political and social force in Lebanon and it is therefore important to gain nuanced understanding of the group. Hizbullah has been an important feature of the Lebanese social and political landscape since 1982, but its state building began in earnest during the post-war period of 1990-2007. This seventeen year period is the focal point of my analysis, however, I also refer to Lebanon's history from 1920-2007 and Hizbullah's war-time development from 1982-1990 to put the group's evolution into context.

This thesis uses a qualitative research program and I have analysed data collected from primary and secondary sources. Some of the primary data in this thesis was derived from the participant observation (Devine, 1995: 137) I engaged in Lebanon 2005. I participated in protests, rallies and demonstrations after the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and the withdrawal of Syrian troops, traveled to Hizbullah-controlled regions in south Beirut and south Lebanon, and conducted interviews with academics, experts, and Hizbullah members. The information I gathered during this year prompted this thesis and provided some of the primary evidence I have used for my analysis. I have used this material because, unlike other primary sources, I am conscious of how it was collected, collated, and assessed.

Other primary material I have relied on consists of news reports from Lebanese and international news sources, the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), and International Crisis Group reports. I have also accessed the English translation of speeches, policies, and announcements from Hizbullah's official English website, *Moqawama.org*. I have critically analysed these primary sources to provide evidence and

depth to my argument. The secondary material I have used includes peer-reviewed journals, other university published texts, and books and journals from important authors. I have chosen these sources as they provide evidence, background, and quantitative data (such as opinion polls and demographic data) that I could not obtain from primary sources.

I did face some considerable challenges in obtaining data for this thesis. One major challenge was a language problem. Most of the primary sources concerning Hizbullah and Lebanon were in Arabic, and I was unable to use this material unless I could find an English translation. However, the greatest obstacle I faced in compiling evidence for this thesis was finding publicly available primary sources that depict Hizbullah's goals in Lebanon. Hizbullah is a clandestine group and it rarely publicly announces its objectives in Lebanon – the closest example of Hizbullah saying it is a state-building movement was at Hizbullah's "victory rally" after the 2006 war (see page one). In studying Hizbullah as a state-building movement, I have therefore analysed the group's *actions* rather than its *words*. However I was able to ascertain some of the group's objectives from the interview I conducted with Hizbullah Media Representative, Hussein Naboulsi in 2005.

## ■ 2 ■

### **State Breaking as State Making in the Developing World**

**T**he theoretical framework for this study is based on early state making in Europe and the instability of “new states” in the developing world. Conflict, failed governance, fractured societies, and militarised sub-state group are characteristic of post-1945 states. By examining the “weak” (Migdal 1988, 2001) or “quasi” (Jackson 1990) states of the developing world in the context of state making in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe, I argue that Hizbullah is undertaking a state building process in south Lebanon. The absence or weakening of political order can prompt alternate power structures in the form of state-building movements. As seen by Hizbullah, these state-building movements are becoming an organic alternative power structure by filling the void of the incompetent and unrepresentative state.

#### **State Making in Europe**

The development of the state format of political organisation was a lengthy, diverse, and organic process. State formation takes place when *mediated* rule, in which powerful kings rule through local powers, transforms to *direct* rule, whereby mutual interdependence between ruler and the ruled is developed through institutions and administrations. The emergence of states was sparked by unfettered competition between numerous actors over limited resources. Competition over land and produce created “private” dominions; whereby competitors protected their domains by raising local armies to guard against aggressors (Saouli, 2006: 703-704). Internally, rulers pacified the population through violence (or threat of violence), and crushed local rivals. When the state authority was no longer threatened by internal challenges it maintained its rule by providing security, infrastructure, and institutions to persons living within its

territory (Tilly 1975; Holsti, 1996: 91). In return for these services, states could then extract resources such as man-power and capital (through taxes) from their citizens to fuel the war-making required to solidify their territory (Cohen *et al*, 1981: 905). The state making of political units between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries was influenced by the domestic and regional politics of their neighbours (Tilly 1990: 25). As states disarmed their citizens and increased their authority within their borders, a security dilemma ensued whereby the centralisation was seen as a threat to neighbours who then emulated the process in response (Holsti, 1996: 44).

The European state building experience provides a historical “long view” of the development of the modern state. Between the fall of the Roman Empire and the French Revolution, Europe witnessed the creation of new sovereign political entities where empires once held sway (Ertman, 1997: 1). Some authors argue that this process of state making was the result of the relative continental isolation from imperial power centers, a common Christian culture, or the replacement of elite Latin with mass colloquial languages (cf. Holsti, 1996: 42). The development of cities that fostered capital accumulation (Tilly 1990) was also a critical source for the territorial state. However, a common feature of European state making was the role of war in centralising control. Tilly (1990) argues that war and the preparation for war acted as a central and necessary mechanism affecting the entire process of state formation (1990: 14-15). The more war-makers penetrated society to fund their conflicts, the more they were forced to strike bargains with their subjects - transforming what had previously resembled extortion rackets into more accountable and institutionalised political entities (Tilly, 1985: 169-191).

The centrality of war in European state making may shed some light on the function and trajectory of sub-state actors in weak states. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Europe was made up of approximately 500 distinct political units. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, Europe had been reduced to 19 units consisting of either the modern nation-state or the multinational empire (Holsti, 1996: 42). The drastic reduction of political units indicates that there were a multitude of unsuccessful rivals for sovereign power. Free cities, principalities, bishoprics, and a variety of other entities were dissolved (violently) or consolidated to make way for a larger and stronger entity (Tilly, 1975: 24-25). This zero-sum creation of states was an organic process based on “the survival of the fittest”. Tilly warns that “major political transformations which occurred in the past may not repeat themselves in the present and future, and are very unlikely to present themselves in exactly the same way” (1975: 3). Nevertheless, the European experience illustrates an important fact; that “natural” state making involved the rise of some political entities at the cost of many others. This fact may have serious implications for Hizbullah's state building in Lebanon (see chapter six).

However, the process of European state development was not necessarily the same procedure that occurred throughout the world. State making in 17<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Empire was characterized by incorporation and accommodation as well as the use of force. While local power in Europe was “crushed” during state making, it was “managed” in the Ottoman Empire allowing for coexistence between the political centre and the political entities on the periphery (Barkey, 1994: 1). State formation in 19<sup>th</sup> century Latin America also involved a combination of both coercion and incorporation (Lopez-Alves, 2000). European states were generally contiguous, and therefore high levels of coercion were needed to protect territory and crush internal rivals. In much of

the rest of the world, however, states generally constituted of a powerful core beyond which central authority dwindled. This allowed for greater levels of cooptation rather than coercion (Clapham, 2004: 78-79). The differing levels of coercion and cooptation are, interestingly, a feature of modern state making, and as I will illustrate, are also characteristic of state-building movements.

## **Definitions of the State**

Academic literature emphasizes two primary approaches to defining the state: the empirical, and the judicial. In Weber's classical empirical definition, states are "compulsory political organisations [whose] administrative staff successfully uphold the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force... within a given territory" (1978: 54). Tilly also emphasises the empirical aspects of statehood, noting that states are "relatively centralised, differentiated organisations the officials of which more or less successfully claim control over the chief concentrated means of violence within a population inhabiting a large, contiguous territory (Tilly, 1985: 170). Migdal (2002) views states as shaped by the image they project; they create the perception they are the controlling centers of society, but they are constrained by how effectively they fulfill their perceived obligations (Migdal, 2002: 15-16). Buzan (1991) also focuses on the empirical and ideational definition of the state, and suggests that the state contains three interlinked components: (1) the idea of the state; (2) the physical basis for the state; and (3) the institutional expression of the state (1991: Ch 2). Migdal and Buzan's definitions provide looser empirical criteria for what constitutes a state which has interesting implications for the evaluation of Hizbullah's role within Lebanon.

However, many states in the contemporary developing world (and in some cases the Western world<sup>2</sup>) do not meet some aspects of the empirical test of statehood. In his classic article, Nettl (1968) argues that states differ in their degree of “stateness”, in terms of institutional, intellectual and cultural markers. However, Nettl asserts that even low levels of stateness can be overcome by the “invariant” function of the international system (1968: 564). Jackson (1990) also recognises the impact of the international system on states, but claims that the international arena *legitimises* the statehood of political entities that would otherwise not meet the empirical criteria. These “quasi-states” are states that are recognised as sovereign and independent units by other states in the international system, but that cannot meet even the basic means of empirical statehood - such as the monopoly of force over all the territory. Accordingly, some states (particularly post-1945 states) are not self-standing structures with domestic foundations, but are “territorial jurisdictions supported from above by international law and material aid – a kind of international safety net” (Jackson, 1990: 5). In other words, some new states are granted “judicial” statehood but they do not satisfy “empirical” statehood. As will be discussed below, the shift from empirical to judicial definitions of statehood has stimulated domestic instability in new states and given rise to militarised sub-state groups that challenge state authority.

The difference between empirical and judicial statehood are best illustrated by comparing the state making ventures of Hizbullah and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). What differentiates Hizbullah from the PLO's state building

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<sup>2</sup> For example, even in the United Kingdom, which satisfies the criteria for statehood better than most, there are substantial populations – predominantly in Northern Ireland, but also in Scotland and Wales – who do not accept their own membership of the state that claims them. There have even been occasions, again, most notably in Northern Ireland, where the power of the government over its territory was contested (Clapham, 1996: 12).



strategy is that the former focuses on the *empirical* aspects of statehood (such as service provision, monopoly of coercion, and taxation), while the latter was primarily motivated by *judicial* statehood (Jackson, 1990). From the mid-1960s the PLO became a distinct political actor; enjoying considerable autonomy and extensive recognition on the regional and international stages. Resistance to Israeli occupation was not stimulated by a desirable new political order, but rather was a means of creating a state in the western image and therefore a validation in itself. The PLO adopted the norms and “rules” of the dominant state system in order to grant it international recognition and mobilise external (rather than internal) support (Sayign, 2000: 204-206). Hizbullah, on the other hand, focuses on the grassroots, empirical attributes of a state and has built a strong and *internally* legitimate structure. The Party of God provides health and medical services, infrastructure, administration, and protection to its citizens, as well as providing political representation. These two cases exemplify the different strategies state-building movements can undertake and clearly illustrate the empirical and judicial definitions of statehood.

### **The Failure of States in the Developing World**

The imposition of European state making models on new states in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries created significant problems for groups within newly created borders. Ayooob (1995) contends that internal instability in weak states is akin to the violence and volatility that occurred in the early stages of state formation in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe (1995: Ch 2). State making in the developing world, as the European experience demonstrates, can be defined primarily in terms of, “the primitive accumulation of centralised state power” (Cohen *et al* 1981: 902). In other words, the expansion and consolidation of state control over a population in a defined territorial space. This

process is often contested by internal groups who refuse to accept the legitimacy of the new governing body, which can lead to internal violence (Ayoob, 1994: 21).

What is different from the European experience, however, is the influence of international norms of state behaviour. The notion of an ideal democratic welfare state and the expansion of communications technology (such as satellite television) have given populations in the developing world a heightened awareness of human, civil, and political rights. This factor restricts a state's ability to use coercion as a means of centralising control and crushing internal rivals (Ayoob, 1992: 73). The inability of states to assert their authority and the inconsistencies between nationalist aspirations and the imposed state has made the developing world particularly susceptible to instability and internal challenges to state power.

### **Weak States and State-Building Movements**

One feature of the weak, failed, or collapsed states in the developing world is armed sub-state groups who challenge state authority. When a state cannot centralise control or assert its legitimate right to rule, militarised sub-state groups can carve a space for themselves within the state's sovereign borders. The state's unwillingness or inability to provide for its citizens and its lack of social legitimacy have given rise to alternative forms of political order that, in some cases, are in sharp and favourable contrast to the ones above them (Kingston, 2004: 1). These state-building movements maintain an extension of force, territory, national identity and internal legitimacy, have the capacity to generate revenue, and develop and maintain administration and infrastructure (Spears, 2004: 17). Like states, state-building movements practice both external and internal expressions of statehood; including establishing alliances and external support,

and building a large and cohesive constituency (Rotberg, 2003: 10). State-building movements often enjoy considerable popular support. In the absence of a strong state, people are left to choose among state entities and social organisations that offer the most attractive benefits with the fewest sanctions (Migdal, 2004: 18). State-building movements are able to win over the population and achieve internal (but not necessarily international) legitimacy because of their ability to provide for the citizenry.

Sub-state groups in the developing world can be understood theoretically as a “natural” or “organic” response to the failure of the modern state model. Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, weak states that could not maintain even the basic empirical attributes of statehood, such as the monopoly of the means of coercion, would have been swallowed up by stronger powers (Tilly 1975: 84; Jackson, 1990: 23). If this organic process is translated to sub-state actors and weak states in the contemporary world, then the emergence of alternative power structures is of great significance. Tilly's zero-sum model of European state development suggests that, depending on the weakness of the host state, conflict and internal war may push sub-state political entities toward statehood. In other words, if the judicial nature of statehood did not have the prominence it has today, then these sub-state units could organically form the community of states (Spears 2004: 17). If the developing world is undergoing a similar state building process to 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe, then armed sub-state political units can be understood as a fundamental step in that process. This theoretical framework will provide the foundations for understanding Hizbullah's role in Lebanon and provide the possible trajectory of its evolution as a state-building movement.

## ■ 3 ■

### **The Place for a State Within a State**

**L**ebanon has oscillated between weakness and failure since its independence from the French Mandate in 1943. The inherent weakness in the political structure of the country led to the collapse of the state and prevented full recovery after the conflict. This chapter will demonstrate how the weak Lebanese state has created a power vacuum that allows Hizbullah to carve a space for itself and establish a parallel state-like structure. Like many states granted independence in the de-colonisation period, Lebanon was established as a state before a Lebanese nation could develop. The country was carved out of Greater Syria by the French in 1920 and became home to Christians, Druze, and other religious minorities in the region. In 1943, Lebanon was granted independence and a power-sharing consociational political system was developed to incorporate the majority sects; the Maronite Christians and the Sunni Muslims (Yiftachel, 1992: 323). The sectarian basis of politics and society institutionalised family and religious loyalty over loyalty to the state. The inability of the Lebanese government to create a united nation led to the collapse of the state during the fifteen year civil war (1975-1990). Lebanon has recovered from the civil war but remains weak. National reconciliation has not taken place and the power-sharing formula continues to be incompatible with the demographic dynamics of the country.

#### **1943 - 1974: Sowing the Seeds of Failure**

In 1943, Lebanon emerged as a classical consociational democracy, adopting the principles of proportionality, power-sharing, autonomy, and veto. This political arrangement was based on the unwritten 'National Pact' which shared power between the country's main religious sects. The Pact stipulated that the President be a Maronite

Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Parliament to be elected on the basis of six Christians to every five Muslims. This confessional formula of representation was based on the first (and only) census taken in 1932 (Maktabi, 1999). The National Pact also stipulated that the key positions in the government, such as the highest judicial position, Army Commander, and the head of intelligence and internal security, would be filled by Maronites (Krayem, 1997: 412). This sectarian-based political system meant that the production of political elites began within the sect but soon became inter-sectarian struggles as elites competed on a national level. The power-sharing agreement institutionalised sectarian rivalries and prevented the establishment of a unified Lebanese political community.

Demographic changes and growing resentment between the haves and the have-nots eventually put pressure on the Maronite-biased distribution of power. Before the outbreak of civil war, Lebanese politics had the appearance of democracy but had little substance. Elections took place regularly and a large measure of freedom was enjoyed by the population, yet much of political life was overshadowed by a “general disregard for the law and the absence of basic norms and rules of the game among its participants” (Barak, 2003: 313). In a typical ethnic security dilemma (Posen, 1993), leaders of sectarian communities feared domination by one another and used the power-sharing system to preserve their power. Corruption, intimidation of voters, and occasionally, assassination of political leaders, were a common feature of election periods (Barak, 2003: 313).

Political inter-sect rivalries were exacerbated by the economic disparities between the different Lebanese sects. In the early years of independence, the Maronites had higher

literacy rates and held higher ranking jobs than their Muslim counterparts because they had greater access to government resources. By 1958, seventy-nine percent of Shiite, fifty-nine percent of Sunni, and fifty-one percent of Druze Muslims were illiterate, compared to forty-two percent of Maronites (Kliot, 1987: 58). In the 1960s, the poverty belt of economic migrants on the outskirts of Beirut and southern Lebanon (both predominantly Shiite areas – see Appendix 2) had death rates two or three times higher than the national average. Muslim regions were also provided with fewer services, infrastructure, and development projects (Kliot, 1987: 70). The economic disparity between the sectarian communities intensified internal divisions and put pressure on the existing consociational system.

In 1958, Lebanon experienced its first taste of sectarian-based conflict. The Lebanese Muslims, who were sympathetic to the Pan-Arab ideology of Egypt and Syria, called for a more favourable position in Lebanon's power-sharing system. The Christians resisted this pressure and the country suffered some months of instability. The conflict between the revisionist Muslims and the "status quo" Christians halted before the collapse of the state - however the fundamental causes of conflict went unchallenged. (Saouli, 2006: 709). By the 1970's, structural changes occurring in Lebanon and the region upset the Maronite-Sunni political balance and created a multipolar political struggle that was inherently unstable (Waltz, 1988: 622). First, there was a demographic shift in the favour of the Muslims, who became the majority<sup>3</sup> (Shanahan, 2006: 2-3). Second, the Shiites became increasingly resentful of their disproportional representation in the power-sharing arrangement and began to mobilise politically (Norton, 1999: 6-9). Finally, interference from external players, such as the Palestine Liberation

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<sup>3</sup> Current Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) figures give the Muslims a majority of 60 percent (<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/le.html>).

Organisation (PLO), Syria, Israel, Egypt, and the great powers further exacerbated the power-sharing system. The weakness of the Lebanese state permitted the heavily armed PLO to create a state within a state (after their expulsion from Jordan in 1970), which further drove a wedge between the Christian and Muslim Lebanese (Saouli, 2006: 70). In sum, the inability (or unwillingness) of the Lebanese government to revise the 1943 National Pact to reflect the demographic and economic developments in the country, coupled hostile foreign interference, sowed the seeds of a total collapse of the state.

### **1975-1990: The Collapse of the State**

Lebanon's political, social, economic, and ideological tensions ultimately exploded in a protracted civil war from 1975 to 1990. The war in Lebanon was fought over a number of issues including the balance of power in government, the role of armed Palestinian groups, the redistribution of wealth, and Lebanon's foreign policy orientation (either "Arab" or "Western") (Haddad, 2002: 292). Militias from all sects constructed service institutions and autonomous militarised zones to maximize the economic opportunities created by war, to increase their domestic influence, and to take control of the state (Picard, 2000: 292-293). The failure of the Lebanese state to provide protection to its citizens forced the Lebanese to turn to their community's warlords and militias for security (Rotberg, 2003: 6). In return, militia groups used coercion and predation to extract resources, such as manpower and capital, from the population. By the early 1980s, confessional segregation reached its peak and the sectarian militias ruled the various regions in closed and semi-closed enclaves (Krayem, 1997: 416).

However, Lebanon's instability was not caused by internal divisions alone - its geographical location and regional environment also played a large part in the country's

weakness. Regional factors including the Palestinian military buildup in Lebanon and a local resurgence of Arab Nationalism further aggravated the country's sectarian groups (Saouli, 2006: 706). Lebanon's location between Israel and Syria - two powerful countries at war - also exacerbated Lebanon's internal troubles. External actors exploited Lebanese players to promote their own interests and regional balance of power conflicts were fought between Syria and Israel and their Lebanese proxies on Lebanese soil (Krayem, 1997: 419). Leaders of local militias sought external power and support as leverage to promote their own goals in the domestic arena, as well as to serve the interests of their benefactors (Barak, 2003: 310).

The cause of the Lebanese civil war was neither exclusively internal nor exclusively external. The weakness of the pre-war power-sharing agreement and the economic inequality in the country was exacerbated by external interference and regional politics. Whatever the cause, the fifteen year civil conflict led to the total collapse of the Lebanese state. During the civil war, the state lost control of its borders and authority in many districts. Militias took over the role of the state and attempted to irreversibly undermine its authority (Picard, 2000: 294). Drug production and trafficking - which were previously kept in check by the government - proliferated. Shipments of small arms and heavy weapons poured into the country by land and sea through a host of militia-run ports (Barak, 2003: 309). By the 1990 conclusion of the conflict, 144, 240 persons were killed and 197, 506 were wounded. Almost one third of Lebanon's pre-1975 population of 3.1 million had left the country (Barak, 2003: 308). While most players in the conflict laid down their arms and resumed their lives in the 1990s, the state's recovery remained a challenge.



### **1991-2007: From Failure to Protracted Weakness**

The civil war was finally settled by the 1989 Ta'if Accord; a document designed to regulate the conflict of interests between the various sects. The Accord brought basic modifications to the power-sharing system but it did not alter the fundamental character of the National Pact. Sectarian proportionality remained, but the proportion of Muslims to Christians in the parliament increased to 1:1 rather than the 6:5 in favour of the Christians (Krayem, 1997: 414). Essentially, the agreement implemented a change in the Lebanese political structure to account for the new balance of power among the communities; namely, the decline of the Maronites and the advance of the Sunnis (Haddad, 2002: 293). The Accord ended sectarian violence in the country but it failed to promote cooperation among Lebanese groups. The reproduction of the Lebanese confessional system, albeit with a new formula that allocated more power to the Muslims, institutionalised the multipolar pre-war political environment (Khalaf, 2003: 116-11).

One of the major consequences of the civil war was the increase in family loyalties and communal solidarities at the cost of the state. By 1990, more than 1.2 million Lebanese, about thirty percent of the population, had been uprooted from their homes and communities. Massive population shifts, accompanied by the reintegration of displaced groups into more homogeneous areas, reinforced communal solidarity and brought about the disintegration of inter-sect interaction (Haddad, 2002: 297). The results of a 1983 study concluded that seventy percent of respondents restricted their daily movements to the communal areas in which they live. The authors of the poll concluded that, "the psychological barriers accompanying sociocultural differences [in Lebanon] are becoming deeper and more in-grown" (Khalaf, 2003: 127). Evidence suggests that

time has not healed these wounds. A 2000 survey revealed that high levels of distrust, misperception, suspicion, and fear characterize relations between various Lebanese sectarian groups (Haddad, 2002: 304). The lack of a common national identity and the absence of a reconciliation process indicate that the inherent fractures in Lebanese society have persisted after the war.

Lebanon has regained its status as a legitimate international player despite the fundamental flaws and weaknesses in the state (Barak, 2003: 328). The Lebanese economy has never recovered its pre-1975 status, and internal and external factors continue to influence Lebanon's ability to function as a state. Lebanon currently has over thirty billion dollars of public debts which, according to International Monetary Fund (IMF) 2006 figures, is 174.6 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) - one of the highest debt to GDP ratios in the world (IMF, 2006: 9). The entry of militia leaders into the political system institutionalised confessional nepotism and led to a virtual paralysis of the administrative authorities (Krayem, 1997: 427). The thirty-year Syrian intervention in Lebanon (1975-2005) provided the "coercive" function in Lebanon and reduced the threat of a security dilemma between rival militias in the post-war years. This provided the stability for Lebanon to function internally and internationally as a state - but at a cost. Lebanon was restricted by Syria's omnipresent control and it arguably became a mere satellite of the Assad regime (Rotberg, 2004: 19). These factors provide a snapshot of the weakness of the Lebanese state. As chapters four and five will demonstrate, these weaknesses have allowed Hizbullah to carve a space for itself and establish a parallel state-like structure at the cost of government authority.

## Hizbullah's State Building: The External Dimension

Hizbullah has been battling the United States, its western allies, and Israel since its inception as a military force in 1982. Backed by alliances with Iran and Syria, Hizbullah uses these external conflicts as a means of solidifying its territory, autonomy, and monopoly of coercion in the south of Lebanon. The external expression of statehood allows Hizbullah to demonstrate its military power to domestic and regional audiences, increase its legitimacy as a defender of “Arab honour”, and play a role in international politics. This chapter will examine Hizbullah's motivation and methods for its external expression of statehood. By displaying its military might, enacting independent foreign policy, forming advantageous alliances, and engaging in regional politics, Hizbullah demonstrates international influence normally reserved for sovereign states. This function of Hizbullah illustrates its state-like character and provides an important foundation for its domestic survival in Lebanon.

### Resistance to Israel: the Root of Hizbullah's Statehood

Resistance to Israeli intervention in Lebanon is Hizbullah's formal *raison d'être*, and provides the means to demonstrate its strength, assert its authority, and solidify its area of control. Emerging from the 1989 Ta'if Accord in the privileged position of the only sectarian militia permitted to retain arms, Hizbullah's autonomy of coercion has provided the means for its external expression of statehood. If war is considered the midwife of state making (Tilly, 1985) then Hizbullah's resistance to Israel provides the pretext to strengthen its state building by engaging in regional affairs. The conflict gives Hizbullah the “cause” to increase its arsenal and strengthen its army. The Party of God is reported to have as many as 10,000 Katyusha rockets and has recently used (in the

2006 war) Iranian supplied advanced anti-ship and anti-tank missiles that have a range of ninety-five kilometres (McGregor, 2006: 6). The organisation fired 3,790 rockets into Israel, hitting 901 communities and killing forty-two Israeli civilians. This served as a demonstration of the “reach” of its coercive ability, which increased the group’s standing as an autonomous state-like political player (Makovsky & White, 2006: 42). The conflict with Israel not only gives Hizbullah the pretext to build up its army, but it allows the group to expand its territorial base and solidify its state-like borders. In the aftermath of the 2006 conflict, Hizbullah began buying up tracts of land owned by Christians and other non-Shiite in southern Lebanon. The land grab is seen as an effort by Hizbullah to rearm and fortify the strategically important areas in the south to strengthen its coercive ability against Israel (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 14 Aug, 2007).

The Party of God’s primary external expression of statehood is its ability to make unilateral foreign policy decisions. By preventing the deployment of government troops in the south and engaging independent foreign policy, Hizbullah can assert its authority and behave like a sovereign state. The organisation’s decision to kidnap two Israeli soldiers that sparked the thirty-four day conflict was taken unilaterally, and, like most of its military operations with Israel, Hizbullah offered no consultation or warning to the Lebanese government (Fakhoury-Muhlbacher, 2007: 6). Hizbullah is therefore a *parallel authority* in Lebanon, which is indicative of its status as a state-building movement. The Lebanese state and the international community are unable to prevent Hizbullah’s independent foreign policy because of the organisation’s broad domestic support<sup>4</sup>, its military and social autonomy in the south, and the fragility of the sectarian

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<sup>4</sup> There is no data that indicates the actual number of Hizbullah supporters, and estimating figures based on the number of Hizbullah members elected in municipal and national elections is not illustrative of Hizbullah support because of the sectarian restrictions in the Lebanese political system. However, anecdotal evidence and the size of Hizbullah staged protests suggest that “most” of the Shiite population support Hizbullah. (Smiles 2007).

balance in the country. As Mahmoud Qumati, a member of Hizbullah's political bureau, said:

[The current situation] will not change until the Shaba [*sic*] farms are freed, our prisoners released and our country is safe. We know the international community rejects these conditions, but the situation will last because there is no way to pressure us: a new war is unlikely and imposing an international siege on our movement is an old story for which we are well prepared (ICG, 2006: 7).

This indicates that the organisation is in a comfortable position to maintain its monopoly over the means of coercion and undertake unilateral foreign policy as an external expression of its statehood.

Nevertheless, Hizbullah has much at stake with its foreign policy decisions. Its place of prestige in the "Arab street" (as will be discussed below) and within Lebanon rest largely on how well the group performs against Israel and whether or not it is left standing after open confrontation. Hizbullah is therefore constrained in its foreign policy as it must balance its identity as a defender of Arab pride with the potential backlash of appearing to wreck havoc upon Lebanon. In an interview on Lebanon's *New TV* on August 27, 2006, Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah declared: "We did not think, even one percent, that the capture [of two soldiers] would lead to a war at this time and of this magnitude. You ask me, if I had known on July 11...that the operation would lead to such a war, would I do it? I say no, absolutely not"<sup>5</sup> (in Makovsky & White, 2006: 19). This admission of miscalculation, which is virtually unprecedented for an Arab leader, can be seen as a signal that Hizbullah fears loss of military legitimacy inside and outside Lebanon. While Hizbullah's foreign policy is one of its more powerful tools for maintaining autonomy and expanding its state building,

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<sup>5</sup> Despite billing the conclusion of the 2006 as a "Divine Victory", Hizbullah suffered substantial losses in the conflict. The organisation is reported to have lost 300-500 fighters and thousands of rockets. Much of Hizbullah's civilian infrastructure was also destroyed, including financial institutions and social service centres (Makovshy & White, 2006: 19).

the organisation must also be careful not to overreach and lose the domestic support that enables it to undertake state-like foreign policy.

### **Advantageous Alliances: Hizbullah, Syria, and Iran**

Hizbullah has developed alliances with its powerful neighbours, Syria and Iran, to provide resources and support for its autonomy and ensure its domestic survival. A sub-state group's survival is dependent on its coercive or economic functions, and importantly, its ability to knit together regional alliances that provide support, protection, and guidance (Saouli, 2006: 709). Hizbullah's state building in Lebanon has involved maintaining advantageous alliances with Syria, which until recently was the dominant external power within Lebanon; and Iran, its primary financial, military, and spiritual benefactor. Hizbullah was founded out of a joint agreement between Syria and Iran to allow the latter to send troops to Lebanon in response to the Israeli invasion. Iranian Revolutionary Guards organised, armed, trained, and united various Shiite groups into Hizbullah, and from that point onward, the organisation has become the beneficiary of generous support and ideological guidance from the Iranian government (Early, 2006: 119). Estimates put Iranian financial support to Hizbullah at US\$100 million per year since 1982 (Byman, 2005: 87). This financial support shields the organisation from one of the necessary attributes of state-building movements – economic independence – and has accelerated its success by “fifty years” from what it would have been able to accomplish on its own (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002: 14).

Iran provides the organisation with financial support and operational guidance, yet Hizbullah's relationship with Syria can be described as a double-edged sword. Before the withdrawal of Syrian troops in 2005, Damascus's tight grip on Lebanese politics meant every militia and political party in Lebanon was forced to bow to its will or face

political extinction. Syria permitted Hizbullah to maintain its arms at the conclusion of the civil war to use it as a cats-claw against Israel. At the same time, Damascus restricted the organisation's freedom in the domestic arena by manipulating electoral lists and alliances during national and municipal elections (Saouli, 2003: 4). Syria also periodically tried to contain Hizbullah's growing influence by force. The most dramatic instance occurred when the Assad regime killed 23 Hizbullah members in 1987 (Norton, 2007: 72). Syria's efforts to "divide and rule" prevented any one party in Lebanon becoming strong enough to deliver a knock-out blow to another. While its relationship may have been one-sided, Hizbullah safeguarded its alliance with Syria as the Assad regime protected Hizbullah's monopoly of coercion in the south.

Hizbullah's strategic alliances with Syria and Iran have allowed the group to attain its present status and strength in the country. Its external allies have provided logistical support for its independent foreign policy, have allowed it to maintain its autonomy of coercion, and have enabled it to increase its relative domestic power. Yet recent political developments in the region have lessened Hizbullah's reliance on external allies for domestic survival. Under Rufsanjani's and Khatami's presidencies, Iran cut funding to the group by seventy per cent (although estimates suggest that the organisation receives US \$100 from the current regime) (Hamzeh, 2004: 63; Levitt, 2005: 4). However, the organisation's state building process has enabled it to become increasingly economically independent from Tehran. Figures for Hizbullah's income are not publicly available, but it is estimated that the organisation derives additional funds from the khums<sup>6</sup> of its supporters, from donations from wealthy Shiite individuals in Lebanon, Africa, and South America, and from a network of financial and business

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<sup>6</sup> The khums are a legally binding donation of one-fifth of one's annual income to the Islamic 'ulama' (community). These religious taxes are arguably comparable to formal taxes imposed by the state (Hamzeh, 2004: 63-64).

investments in Lebanon and abroad (Hamzeh, 2004: 63-64). Hizbullah also allegedly receives funding through criminal enterprises, such as money laundering, smuggling, fraud, and the drug and diamond trades in South America and Africa respectively (Levitt, 2005: 6-7). While the cessation of Iranian funding would certainly hamper Hizbullah's generosity to its constituents, the organisation's independent financial enterprises would allow it to continue its state building process in Lebanon unhindered by its Shiite ally.

Hizbullah's external state-like activities have been emboldened by the decline of Syria in Lebanon. Syria's power and stature in the region began a downward spiral with the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, and gained momentum following the death of Hafez al-Assad in June 2002 and the accession of his son Bashar. The death of Hafez removed a major obstacle from Hizbullah's ability to expand its influence in Lebanon. The elder Assad had never met with the Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, and regarded the organisation as just another Syrian pawn in Lebanon. His son and heir Bashar, on the other hand, has met with Nasrallah numerous times and looks up to him as an admired warlord and experienced role model (Zisser, 2002: 7). The "friendly" relationship between the current Syrian President and Hizbullah's Secretary-General testifies to Bashar's weakness in the Lebanese arena - which culminated with the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and the subsequent withdrawal of Syrian troops in 2005 (Hamzeh, 2004: 115). Hizbullah's strategic alliances with Syria and Iran have enabled it to strengthen and expand its state building venture. Yet evidence suggests that these alliances are subject to the organisation's "need" for external benefactors. The current political climate suggests that Hizbullah has increased freedom and autonomy in Lebanon and would thus be less likely to respond to Syria's or Iran's needs if doing so would jeopardise its own interests in Lebanon.



## **Status and Influence: Hizbullah's Use of Regional Politics**

Hizbullah accentuates its reputation as the most successful Arab force in against Israel in order to increase its status and regional influence in the Middle East. The withdrawal of Israeli troops in May 2000 and the perceived “victory” of Hizbullah in the 2006 conflict with Israel intensified regional acclaim of the organisation's military ability. Much of the Arab world recognised that Hizbullah had managed what numerous Arab armies had failed to do – defeat the military super-power in the region. Large street rallies were held in Cairo and other Sunni Arab cities to show support for Nasrallah and his struggle with Israel in 2000 and again in 2006 (although Sunni regimes in Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia were critical of Hizbullah during the 2006 conflict) (*The New York Times*, Jan 17, 2007). Hizbullah has made a concerted effort to “regionalize” its foreign policy to gain further acclaim and grassroots regional support. The organisation has incorporated the Palestinian issue on its military agenda, and often refers to the struggle across the border as equal to its mission in Lebanon. Hizbullah's newspapers, and television and radio stations are accessible throughout the Middle East and continuously play propaganda films and “news stories” emphasising Hizbullah's success as an *Arab* resistance force battling the regional “enemy” - Israel (ICG, Nov 2002: 14). Hizbullah effectively uses its media outlets to reinforce its reputation as a powerful regional force in order to gain the prestige and status needed to strengthen its state building efforts.

Interestingly, Hizbullah's “victorious” conflict with Israel and other pro-western Lebanon-based factions has become an opportunity for other Shiite groups to boost symbolic capital with their supporters and further their own political goals. By demonstrating unity and solidarity with the powerful Lebanese group, other military factions can siphon off some of the prestige and acclaim afforded to Hizbullah. On

August 4 2006, thousands of Iraqi Shiites, mostly sympathisers of Muqtada as-Sadr's *al-Mahdi* militia, went out in the streets of Baghdad to express their support for Hizbullah. The Iraqi Shiites carried banners emphasising an analogy between their own battles against US occupation and the fierce resistance put up by Hizbullah (Leenders, 2007: 974). This use of Hizbullah's identity to stimulate mobilisation is further indicative of the effectiveness of the organisation's foreign policy and the important function it plays in gaining power in the region and at home.

However, this prestige has not necessarily survived the current struggle between rival Islamic sects. The ascendancy of Iran (and consequently the Shiites) as a result of the fall of Saddam Hussein and the rise of Shiite militias in Iraq has stimulated fear of a "Shiite crescent" from Iraq, Iran, and Lebanon. As a result, some regional players have lessened their support for Hizbullah, who they see as a key player in the ascendancy of the Shiites at the cost of Sunni states. Jordan intelligence operatives have been trying to infiltrate Shiite groups to work against Hizbullah in the hope of preventing the "Shiite crescent". Sunni Jihadist groups, such as *Fatah Islami* in Lebanon, are also reportedly aiming to eliminate the charismatic Hizbullah leader, Nasrallah (Hersh, 2007). Moreover, some Sunni religious leaders who harbour sensitivities toward Shiite Islam have issued *fatwas* against Hizbullah (*The Daily Star*, Aug 9, 2006). In effect, the increasing tension between the rival sects has led much of the Sunni world to view Hizbullah's resistance to Israel and the west as an antagonistic element of a pending sectarian war. Hizbullah's ability to manipulate, utilize, and consequently be affected by regional politics is indicative of its state-like character. Although not a sovereign state, Hizbullah's foreign policy and international conduct reverberates throughout the Arab world and has far wider implications than merely in its capacity as a "Lebanese" resistance force.

## **All-Arab Identity: The Conflict with the US and the West**

Hizbullah began its military struggle in response to western interference in Lebanese politics during the civil war. This “resistance” to the US and the west is subsidiary to the conflict with Israel, yet it provides the group with an “all-Arab” identity that transposes its Shiite or Lebanese character. Since the early 1980s, Hizbullah has positioned itself as an opponent of US policy in the Middle East and especially Lebanon. Hizbullah managed to drive out the US and its western allies from Lebanon in 1983 and has been connected to a series of notorious attacks on the US during the Lebanese civil war. These include the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut that killed 241 American soldiers, the bombing of the American embassy in Beirut, and the kidnappings of Americans including journalist Terry Anderson and CIA chief William Buckley (Norton, 1999: 1). Hizbullah has consistently used anti-American vitriol in its public statements and is seen as the vanguard against western imperialism in the region. Taking his inspiration from the virulent anti-American statements of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Hizbullah has threatened and condemned the US for its pro-Israeli and anti-Islamic policies. One of the most persistent slogans that appear on banners and billboards throughout Hizbullah-dominated regions is “Death to America” (Jaber, 1997: 145-168).

Hizbullah's anti-American stance is fundamental to its efforts to “regionalize” its military identity. This is motivated by a desire to appease and maintain support from its anti-west allies (Iran and Syria), and to stimulate cross-sectarian support in Lebanon and the region. When Nasrallah faces political criticism for launching rockets into Israel, he accuses the government of being unpatriotic and bowing to “western powers” (Harik, 2004: 77,153). Hizbullah's identity as an “Arab” resistance to western imperialism has had greater salience during the post- 2001 “war on terror”. The US has tried a number

of covert and overt strategies (including the funding Sunni extremists<sup>7</sup>) to contain Hizbullah's external and internal influence. It has coerced and encouraged the Lebanese government to pressure the group, and has cracked down on Syria (with the implementation of the 2003 Syria Accountability Act and UNSCR 1559 of 2004) to undermine Hizbullah's primary logistical supporter (Byman, 2005: 62). These moves to undermine Hizbullah have inadvertently increased its legitimacy as an "Arab" resistance force and stymied any domestic or regional criticism the group may have faced. American pressure on the group has created an environment whereby other Arab and even *Lebanese* critics of Hizbullah are compelled to mute their criticism to avoid seeming to back the US (ICG, 2003: 2). In this sense, the US has bolstered Hizbullah's reach in the region by perpetuating its identity as a weapon against American imperialism.

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<sup>7</sup> Fearful that a politically powerful Hizbullah would bolster Iran's reach and therefore weaken the US's influence, America has interfered in Lebanese politics to tilt the balance in the favour of their Sunni allies. However a by-product of these activities is the bolstering of Sunni extremists. The US has publicly pledged the Siniora government one billion dollars in aid since the 2006 war, which has reportedly trickled into the hands of some Sunni insurgent groups in Lebanon. By attempting to undermine the Shiite threat in the country, the Lebanese government (and indirectly, America) have therefore bolstered Sunni terrorist groups and potentially exacerbated the local and regional Sunni/Shiite divide (Hersch, 2007).

## **Hizbullah's State Building: The Domestic Dimension**

**H**izbullah's role in Lebanon is best examined by analysing the domestic dimensions of its state building process. While the international aspects of Hizbullah's state building provide both the "means" - in the struggle with Israel - and the "expression" - in terms of independent foreign policy - of statehood, the domestic dimension illustrates Hizbullah's evolution into a state-building movement. The need to maintain domestic support has motivated Hizbullah to incorporate the well-being of the Shiites onto its state building agenda. This chapter will explore the domestic elements of Hizbullah's state making. By analysing the military, social, and political components of Hizbullah's state building, I outline the group's complementary tactics of gaining support and increasing power in the domestic arena. The centrality of domestic politics in Hizbullah's motives is often underplayed in the literature (cf. Jaber, 1997; Ranstorp, 1997; Kramer, 1998), but this chapter will illustrate that Hizbullah is a uniquely Lebanese phenomenon whose state building is determined by the ebbs and flows of domestic politics.

### **The Instrumental Value of War**

The military mission of Hizbullah is central to the organisation's world-view and practical agenda. Its foreign policy is used domestically to gain support as a champion of the Shiites and to threaten sectarian rivals who may challenge its autonomy. Hizbullah is seen as a heroic organisation in the eyes of its constituents, which stimulates the domestic support needed to pursue its military agenda (Zisser, 2002: 4). The Shiite community in Lebanon has been politically, socially, and economically marginalised by the traditional power-brokers (namely, Sunnis and Maronites) since the country's inception in 1920 (Shanahan, 2005: Ch 1). The objective of Hizbullah was to

channel these feelings of injustice and deprivation by promising to regain the Shiites' honour through the military resistance to Israel. Hizbullah encourages a sense of pride in enduring Israeli military offensives, and has provided an ideological outlet that counters the Shiite's reputation as "second-class citizens" in Lebanon. In this sense, resistance to Israel is the repository of the Shiite community's religious, cultural, and historical emotion. As a Shiite resident of south Lebanon said after the 2006 conflict, "We have the ability to suffer more than the Israelis. That has to do with our religion. Death is a habit for us" (Smiles, Sept 2006).

The centrality of foreign policy in Hizbullah's ideology and identity suggests that conflict directed at an *external* opponent can also be aimed at securing power *domestically* (Gat, 2006: 405). The conflict with Israel presents Hizbullah with the means to legitimately "contract out" the coercive activities needed to assert political order in its territory without damaging domestic support. An indication of a sub-state group's military strength is its provision of internal order, in terms of eliminating rivals (such as the Lebanese authorities) and reducing criminal activity (Spears, 2004: 20). For example, the military authority of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Columbia* (FARC) rebels was demonstrated by a sharp drop in criminal activity – including murders, robbery and rape - in the weeks and months following its formal control of the southeastern regions of Columbia (Rohter, 1999: 14). Hizbullah's tight grip on criminal activities within the Shiite community is demonstrated by a well-documented case in 1994, when a 16 year old boy killed a woman and two of her children. The organisation arrested, tried, and executed the boy according to Islamic law - ignoring claims from the state that he should have been turned over to the Lebanese authorities (Raschaka, 1994: 48). Hizbullah's covert internal security organ also keeps security files on its members

and maintains reports on every individual or group who approaches them. This ensures domestic order and operational security<sup>8</sup> (Hamzeh, 2004: 73-74). The Party of God's ability to enforce internal order as well as implementing independent foreign policy is a fundamental feature of its state-like character. Not only does it protect its citizens from harm but it prevents internal rivals and strengthens its coercive function.

Hizbullah emphasises security threats to the party, its constituents, and the country at large in order to maintain its status as the sole provider of "protection" in the south. According to Tilly (1985), groups who possess the monopoly of violence often simulate, stimulate, and sometimes fabricate external threats to increase support and justify the extraction of resources (1985: 171). The Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 provoked calls from groups within Lebanon demanding the organisation disarm. To counter these threats Hizbullah emphasises the Israeli occupation of Shabaa Farms, the *Lebanese* (not necessarily Hizbullah) detainees held in Israel, and Israel's efforts to infringe on Lebanon's sovereignty in order to maintain its arms and thus its survival (Leenders, 2006: 45). Emphasising the need to "free" the Shabaa Farms is clearly an attempt by Hizbullah to appease domestic audiences and maintain its legitimacy as a "Lebanese" resistance force. This uninhabited piece of land on the Israeli occupied Syrian/Lebanese border (see Appendix 2) was thrust onto Hizbullah's agenda (after nearly 40 years of neglect) after the Israeli withdrawal in 2000. By using language of Lebanese territorial nationalism, Hizbullah has successfully inserted the Shabaa Farms issue onto the Lebanese agenda, and most importantly, deep into public consciousness

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<sup>8</sup> Hizbullah's military success has been attributed to (among other things) its restraint in collaborating and mixing with the population. As an ex-Lebanese Military Intelligence officer admitted, "you can be a member of Hizbullah your entire life and never see a military fighter with a weapon. They do not come out with their masks off and never operate around people if they can avoid it. They're completely afraid of collaborators. They know this is what breaks the Palestinians – no discipline and too much showing off" (in Prothero, 2006).

as Lebanese occupied land (Kaufman, 2006: 167-170). This gives the group free reign to maintain its arms and autonomy in south Lebanon.

Hizbullah also sidestepped threats that it would be disarmed by emphasising the inexperience of the Lebanese military force and the strength of Hizbullah fighters. The Party of God objected to the government's proposal to deploy the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to the south in 2006 because deployment would be "placing the army in the mouth of a monster". Nasrallah said, "When we objected or expressed reservations [for the deployment], we did not do so out of fear *of* the army... The truth is that we were afraid *for* the army" [emphasis added] (MEMRI, Aug. 15, 2006). Hizbullah's emphasis on the continued threat of Israeli occupation serves two critical purposes. Resistance to Israel's last remaining outpost in Lebanon justifies Hizbullah's autonomy of coercion, while the occupation of the Shabaa Farms justifies the Lebanese government's "refusal" to pursue Hizbullah's disarmament because the organisation has not yet succeeded in liberating all of the country. Ultimately, the Shabaa Farms dispute acts as a cover for the Lebanese state's refusal to do what it fears it cannot – disarm Hizbullah.

Hizbullah's ability to maintain an autonomous army is primarily due to the Lebanese government's inability to confront the organisation. A state's strength can be determined by its ability to expel or crush powerful sub-state groups within its borders (Tilly, 1975; Migdal, 1988). While Lebanon maintains a national security force, the LAF is unable to pose any serious threat to Hizbullah. The LAF numbers about 50,000 troops, whereas Hizbullah fighters number only in the thousands. Despite this quantitative discrepancy, the Lebanese Army has limited fighting experience, lacks



professionalism and proficiency, and has unreliable and out-dated equipment. Hizbullah's well-funded (due to Iranian financial support) and experienced combatants would be a significant threat to the LAF in the event of a clash (Berkovich, 2006). Likewise, the high percentage of Shiite soldiers in the national army reduces the likelihood of open conflict with Hizbullah. The LAF may be reluctant to test fragile sectarian loyalties and potentially dissolving the army by pitting Shiite against Shiite (Barak, 2006: 89). The absence of a Lebanese military force that is able and willing to defeat Hizbullah suggests that the organisation is in a favorable position to carry out its state building operations unhindered by the Lebanese state.

While Hizbullah's foreign policy is used domestically to stimulate support and demonstrate its military power, the group also utilizes non-violent methods *internally* to threaten the government and other rival sects. Hizbullah demonstrates its coercive strength as the largest political force in Lebanon through protests, mass rallies and other propaganda techniques. In 2004, Hizbullah led approximately half a million supporters onto the streets to protest the desecration of the holy sites in Iraq. The protest, which came two days before the municipal elections in the south, signaled the Lebanese population that the organisation had the numbers to democratically take control of the south - even if the electoral system prevented the Shiite from doing so (Alagha, 2007: 56). After the 2006 war, Hizbullah responded to criticism by the "March 14"<sup>9</sup> forces by withdrawing its two members from cabinet and staging protests in Beirut. In a speech aired on Hizbullah's *al-Manar* television, Nasrallah said:

If the [Hizbullah led] opposition wanted to topple the government, it would do so on the first day of its protests. The Lebanese opposition is capable of overthrowing the

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<sup>9</sup> The anti-Syrian multi-confessional coalition which orchestrated the 2005 "Cedar Revolution"; comprising of the Future Current led by Sunni leader Saad Hariri, the Progressive Socialist Party, led by Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, as well as other anti-Syrian Christian factions, namely the Lebanese Forces.

government tomorrow, but what prevented it from doing so is its commitment to civil peace (Moqawama.org, Jan 2007).

Even if Hizbullah makes no effort to use its army to threaten the Lebanese government directly, its capability to do so, as illustrated by its conflict with Israel, is inherently threatening (Nutter, 1994: 34). Hizbullah walks a fine line between displaying its coercive ability externally and demonstrating its strength through non-violent methods internally. Its ability to eliminate (or dampen) internal competition by displaying its coercive *strength* but not its force will therefore depend on the domestic pressure it is experiencing. If it does not encounter significant internal threats, then swaggering is sufficient. But if the organisation faces open conflict from groups within Lebanon, it is unlikely that it would refrain from using force. As a Hizbullah politburo member said, "We can make a revolution in Lebanon, we can occupy Lebanon, but this is not what we want" (Slackman, 2006: 26).

### **Hizbullah's Grassroots State building**

Relying on effective foreign policy to stimulate support and deflect criticism would not necessarily guarantee Hizbullah's survival. The group therefore takes the further step of grassroots state building to solidify its autonomy and influence in Lebanon. Hizbullah's social services and welfare agencies allow it broaden its support base (see footnote 4), legitimise its coercive functions, and institutionalise its state building practices in the areas of its control. Hizbullah has been the main provider of essential services to war-ravaged areas across Lebanon since 1982. The organisation provides medical, financial, and housing facilities primarily to its Shiite followers, but also to other sectarian communities in Lebanon. Hizbullah has also built hospitals, civil defence centres, and supermarkets. These institutions, among others, employ thousands of people in regions that have poor employment opportunities and limited prosperity (Saouli, 2003: 6-7).

The activities of Hizbullah's Social Unit (see Appendix 1) has contributed to the success of Hizbullah in boosting the size of its constituency and skillfully penetrating Lebanon's society, particularly the Shiite community. Through its construction company *Jihad al-Binaa* ("Struggle for Rebuilding"), Hizbullah supplies approximately forty-five percent of Beirut's southern suburbs' water needs and provides maintenance to the government's flailing power networks in the area (Hamzeh, 2004: 51). These social services and institutions are the foundation of Hizbullah's popularity and cross-sectarian support base. They also form the "sweetener" that softens the blow often felt by the group's damaging foreign policy decisions.

The aftermath of the 2006 war with Israel provides a clear example of the importance of Hizbullah's state-like infrastructure and social services in gaining popularity and support. The organisation attempted to reinforce (or in some cases, regain) the allegiance of the Shiite after the 2006 war by distributing money and services that the government failed to deliver. Hizbullah distributed US\$10,000 to \$12,000 in cash to each family that lost its home during the thirty-four day offensive, totaling tens of millions of US dollars. *Jihad al-Binaa* has ear-marked US\$450 million, donated by Iran, for reconstruction operations in the south (*The Daily Star*, May 25 2007). The US government has pledged one billion dollars to the Lebanese government to rebuild the war-damaged regions, however Hizbullah's efficient and swift reconstruction efforts undercuts the government's attempts to penetrate the south (Levitt, 2007: 4). When Nasrallah publicly announced Hizbullah's relief and reconstruction efforts, he declared, "You will not have to ask for anyone's help, you will not have to stand in queues or go anywhere... We cannot wait for the government and its heavy vehicles and machinery because they could take a while" (in Leenders, 2006: 51). By providing services,

welfare, and financial compensation to the war-ravaged areas in Lebanon Hizbullah can win back the legitimacy and respect it may have lost by sparking the 2006 hostilities.

Hizbullah's provision of services as a method of attracting support and loyalty is by no means a unique phenomenon. Hizbullah's social welfare agencies are akin to the grassroots state making beginnings of the Chinese Communist Party (Perry, 1994: 162-163). In fact, the similarities between Hizbullah and Marxist/Leninist principles of social interaction have been well noted. AbuKhalil (1991) contends that an "Islamised" version of Leninist ideology is the driving force behind Hizbullah's provision of welfare and services. Whereas Leninist theory focuses on the struggle between the exploited and the exploiting classes, Hizbullah is motivated to serve "the downtrodden" (*al-mustad'afun*) in contrast to "the arrogant ones" (*al-mustakbirun*) (1991: 395). Hizbullah's identification of the Shiites as the oppressed does not stem from the Qur'an, but from the experiences of the Shiites in Lebanon. The Shiites have been politically, economically, and socially brushed aside by Lebanese non-Shiite elite, and Hizbullah has sought to increase its community's confidence and self-esteem by improving their quality of life (Saad-Ghoreyeb, 2002: 18-19). In this sense, *depravation* and *exploitation* are the determining factors of Shiite oppression and thus the need for services and welfare - rather than poverty *per se*.

The assumption that Hizbullah attracts only the poor and the poorly-educated is a common misconception of western scholars (Sambanis, 2004: 166-169). A survey conducted in 1993 found that forty-four percent of Shiite sampled of *high* socio-economic status indicated affiliation with Hizbullah, while fifty-three percent of those in the medium and forty-seven percent of the low category were also Party of God

followers (Harik, 1996: 53-54). Recent data indicates a similar trend. In a 2002 survey, only ten percent of Shiites classified themselves a lower class. This indicates that the traditional conception of the Shiite as the underclass in Lebanon is no longer demographically correct (Hanf, 2003: 210-213). This data may raise questions of why Hizbullah continues to receive loyalty and support from people who are not dependent on its welfare or social services. The answer lies in the Party of God's state building. The fact that Hizbullah helps people lead the "good life" by providing social infrastructure, employment, education, and public services indicates that the organisation aims to root itself in the hearts and minds of its constituents. Hizbullah's survival rests on its ability to attract a wide support base and therefore its social policies are targeted at *all* the Shiites and the wider Lebanese community.

### **Hizbullah's Role as a Legitimate Political Party**

One of the most interesting, if not contradictory, facets of Hizbullah's state making is its position as a legitimate political party in the Lebanese government. To evaluate Hizbullah's political relationship with the state it is important to first understand the structure of the Lebanese political system and the Shiites' position within it. The Lebanese political system is based on the consociational model, which endeavors to retain and legitimise sectarian cleavages as a means of achieving long-term stability. The consociational model deviates from democratic traditions of consensus by emphasizing the *participatory* rather than majoritarian nature of stable democratic rule (Yiftachel, 1992: 320). However, the consociational system tends to sharpen rather than reduce inter-group tensions, as it helps preserve primordial divisions rather than creating over-arching loyalty to the state (Yiftachel, 1992: 321). The Shiites' underprivileged and underrepresented position in the Lebanese consociational system is

the fundamental political grievance within the community. Estimates suggest that the Shiites currently comprise of approximately forty percent of the population, yet they are limited to twenty-one percent of parliamentary seats and are barred from becoming President or Prime Minister (Shanahan, 2006: 2-3). Hizbullah's decision to participate in national politics was driven to address these feelings of injustice and political isolation in the community. Within this framework, Hizbullah uses the parliament to represent the factional interests of the Shiite community and has little interest or motivation in broadening its objectives beyond its political support base.

The decision for Hizbullah to join parliament in 1992 was fiercely debated by party leaders. The Islamic ideology of Hizbullah stipulated that any concession into secular politics was *haram* (unlawful), yet some leaders, including Secretary-General Nasrallah, recognised that gradual reformation was necessary for the party's survival (Hamzeh, 2004: 109). This move was quite unique for hard-line Islamist parties. Radical Sunni Islamist groups, such as Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Al-Qaeda, would find legitimating a secular, coreligionist government through overt participation ideologically impossible to accept (Early, 2006: 121). Yet the practically minded Hizbullah leadership decided it was better to influence the behaviour of the government from *within* the system rather than relegating itself exclusively to the outside. Political participation also broadened the organisation's horizons beyond its military engagement with Israel, giving it an area to fall back upon should it succeed in its efforts – which it did in May 2000 (Early, 2006: 121). Hizbullah launched its first political program in 1992 based on the following pillars: “(1) the liberation of the “Zionist” occupation; (2) the abolition of political sectarianism; [and] (3) amending the electoral law so that it will be more representative of the populace” (Alagha, 2007: 43). Pillars one to three

remain central to Hizbullah's political program and, as will be discussed later, have even greater salience in the current political climate.

Hizbullah's decision to enter politics was widely supported by the Shiite community, as it offered hope for political empowerment and a slice of government resources. Participation in parliament in Lebanon is generally regarded as an opportunity to access *muhassasat* (allocations) in the form of government jobs, contracts, licenses, or permits that are normally distributed along sectarian lines (Norton, 2007: 101). By joining the parliament, Hizbullah had a greater opportunity to improve the Shiites' position in the state. Hizbullah members lobby in parliament to ensure Shiite-dominated areas receive a fair share of government resources. Access to the decision making process also allows the group to block any unfavorable policies that might damage its autonomy in the south (Saidman *et al*, 2002: 106-107). This is demonstrated by Hizbullah's use of propaganda, threats, and manipulation to justify its control over the means of coercion in the south. When Hizbullah received considerable domestic and international pressure to disarm after the 2006 war, Hizbullah withdrew its two members from Cabinet and collapsed the government (Fakhoury-Muhlbacher, 2007: 6-9). Effectively, the political arena has become yet another sphere for Hizbullah to further its state building enterprise. Rather than "Lebanonizing" the group into a watered-down version of its virulent self (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002; Norton, 2007), Hizbullah's political participation allows it to keep a close eye on Lebanese rivals while pursuing its own political objectives.

Hizbullah's ability to respond to domestic challenges through political means is best demonstrated in the post-Hariri environment. The assassination of Rafiq Hariri on

February 14, 2005 and the subsequent withdrawal of Syrian troops in April 2005 have significantly changed the Lebanese political climate and Hizbullah's position in the country. Without the presence of Syria to block harmful policies and internal criticism of the organisation, Hizbullah increased its presence in the public sphere to safeguard its arms and autonomy in the south. The May 2005 elections (the first parliamentary elections free of Syrian interference since 1972) led to the victory of the "March 14" alliance and the subsequent cooption of the Hizbullah into the coalition government. Hizbullah won fourteen (out of 128) seats in parliament and, for the first time in its history, fielded two (out of twenty-four) seats in Cabinet - claiming the Water and Energy portfolios (ICG, April 2005: 21). This new level of political participation marked a tremendous transformation for Hizbullah. It bolstered its image as a political (rather than "terrorist") force in Lebanon and granted it greater legitimacy in the domestic and regional arenas. Hizbullah uses its political participation as a function of its state building. By protecting its interests, blocking unfavourable decisions, and manipulating existing tensions among internal rivals to suit its needs, Hizbullah can increase its position and power in Lebanon without using force.



## ■ 6 ■

### **Legitimacy or Constraint? Democratic Effects on Hizbullah's State Building**

The evidence presented in chapters four and five indicate that Hizbullah's state building strategy is primarily motivated by domestic politics – it fills the void left by the weak Lebanese state and it champions the cause of the disenfranchised Lebanese Shiites. If Hizbullah's internal and external dimensions of statehood are devoted to increasing its power in the domestic arena, then a number of important theoretical questions must be asked. First, how does Hizbullah fit into the definition of a “state-building movement”? Second, what effects does Hizbullah's state building have on its ability to achieve its aims? Finally, what does Hizbullah's state building mean for the Lebanese state? This chapter will examine the centrality of domestic politics in Hizbullah's state building by analysing the group's sensitivity to domestic opinion, its desire for legitimacy, and its ultimate goals in Lebanon. In doing so, I will provide a nuanced analysis of Hizbullah as a state-building movement and illustrate the “democratic” state-like constraints it suffers as a result of its strategies.

#### **Assessing Hizbullah's Statehood in Lebanon**

Hizbullah can be described as a state-building movement because of the function it fulfills in Lebanese society and the strategies it uses to increase its power in Lebanon. Returning to Spears (2004) definition of states-within-states, I will evaluate the empirical aspects of Hizbullah's state building. (1) The extension of force: Hizbullah maintains monopoly over the means of coercion in the south, and as a result, the state cannot viably challenge the group. (2) Territory: the dispersed nature of the Shiite

population means that Hizbullah is unable to enforce a well-defined border within Lebanon and therefore cannot safeguard its own territorial integrity. However, as the organisation has not indicated that it desires separation from the state (as will be discussed below), a contiguous territory is not essential for its state building process. (3) Capacity to generate revenue: generous funds from Iran shield Hizbullah from this requirement, but its businesses, investments, and alleged criminal activities generate considerable semi-independent revenue to satisfy this criterion. (4) Administration and infrastructure: Hizbullah's well established infrastructure and administration is the "hardware" of its state building venture (2004: 17).

Migdal's (1988) social control indicators provide a further assessment of Hizbullah's non-material state building qualities. State social control indicators - defined as compliance, participation, and legitimacy - determine the state's ability to encourage the population to obey its rules over the rules of any other individual or group (Migdal, 1988: 22-23). Applying the same indicators to Hizbullah illustrates that the organisation fulfills this state-based criteria and arguably outmatches the Lebanese state:

*Compliance:* Hizbullah has unquestionable military superiority over the Lebanese state in southern Lebanon, and the state appears unwilling to compel the national army to challenge the group.

*Participation:* Hizbullah is the largest political organisation in Lebanon and is composed of the country's largest sectarian population. It also directly governs much of south Lebanon, the Becaa Valley, and southern Beirut (see Appendix 2).

*Legitimacy:* the organisation has gained widespread respect for its political integrity and social generosity and has been responsible for the country's liberation - a feat the state was unable to undertake.

### **The Limits of State Making:**

The Party of God's empirical statehood helps it expand its support base and authority in the country. However, like a democratic state, Hizbullah's state building strategy is embedded with "democratic" constraints that hamper its ability to achieve its goals. Hizbullah's reliance on its constituency for resources, support, and legitimacy has created an "instrumental dependence" (Merom, 2003: 18) that restricts the group's capacity to achieve its objectives in Lebanon. Hizbullah's access to social networks and political institutions has provided the means to challenge government authority politically and socially, rather than purely coercively. However, these factors also prevent Hizbullah from utilizing coercive methods to increase its power. By relying on the support of the population to survive, Hizbullah cannot let the "cost" of supporting the group outweigh the "benefits". In other words, Hizbullah walks a fine line between appealing to the population and alienating them by utilizing unpopular coercive methods. As Norton states, "A Trotskyite project of permanent revolution does not sit well with this constituency, and the Hizbullah leadership is nothing if not sensitive to its support base" (2000; 34).

This issue is best illustrated by Hizbullah's objective of implementing an Islamic state in Lebanon. During the civil war, Hizbullah imposed Islamic law upon the territory it controlled – banning the sale of alcohol and forbidding public dancing. The stringent rules bred widespread resentment among the more liberal-minded people of the territories that Hizbullah governed and it soon loosened its restrictive rule (Early, 2006: 120). Hizbullah's idea of a Lebanese Islamic state remains unpopular in post-war Lebanon. In a survey conducted in 1996, only twenty-four per cent of Hizbullah supporters would prefer the organisation implement a governmental system like the

Iranian Islamic republic (Harik, 1996: 53). Ever responsive to public mood, Hizbullah make no reference to a Lebanese Islamic republic in its 1992, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2004, and 2005 parliamentary and municipal election platforms (Alagha, 2007: 183). Conversely, Al-Qaeda's recent drop in approval can be explained by its *inability* to respond to regional opposition to its hard-line advocacy of an Islamic supra-state. In a 2005 poll conducted throughout the Middle East, only six percent of respondents supported al-Qaeda's advocacy of an Islamic state (Telhami, 2006). Hizbullah's responsiveness to public sentiment and its attention to the socio-economic aspects of the community (rather than the Islamic or the revolutionary) helps ensure its broad support base and internal legitimacy.

Hizbullah is not only restricted by its own constituency in Lebanon but it must also mollify the (sometimes hostile) wider Lebanese community to ensure its survival. Hizbullah's tense relationship with the non-Shiite political elite was largely dictated by Syria prior to 2005. Damascus ensured that Hizbullah did not become too politically powerful by setting a "Syrian ceiling" - an upper limit on how many Hizbullah candidates were permitted to compete in parliamentary elections (Norton, 2007: 102). Hizbullah has been freed from the restrictive presence of its benefactor since the Syrian withdrawal in 2005, but at the same time it has been exposed to greater criticism from within Lebanon. A 2005 poll indicates that sixty percent of Druze saw the disarming of Hizbullah as necessary for the country's future, while one in seven Maronites and Sunnis agreed (Zogby Poll: March 7, 2005). Appeasing the non-Shiite communities is equally vital for Hizbullah as appeasing its own constituency. If the organisation does not successfully placate (or threaten) its internal rivals into submission, then it may be forced to use coercive methods to maintain its position as the most powerful political

party. This would consequently damage its domestic support and survival. Hizbullah's preoccupation with legitimacy and maintaining support (or at least acceptance) from the wider Lebanese community indicates that the organisation is restricted in how it achieves its political goals. Striking a balance between state-like autonomy and its responsibility as a "Lebanese" (rather than Shiite) resistance group therefore prevents Hizbullah from openly challenging the Lebanese government.

### **Grassroots Legitimacy and State Building**

Hizbullah's focus on being regarded as "legitimate" in the domestic, regional, and to a lesser extent, international realms is a key component of its state building venture. Legitimacy is one of the fundamental mobilising factors in the Arab world (Hudson, 1977: 393-394) and the Lebanese state's lack of legitimacy provides room for Hizbullah to increase its own legitimacy and status. Once the state's capacity to provide for the population diminishes and corruption becomes rife, citizens will be less likely to express loyalty to the state and its legitimacy plummets (Rotberg, 2003: 9). A 1995 World Bank study among Lebanese expatriates concluded that, "there is a perception that corruption has become institutionalised in networks of protection, that the state behaves beyond the law, and that self-dealing, bribes and the bartering of favours and influence is customary" (Speetjens, 2005: 92). The integration of former warlords into the legitimate political system meant that the government became the agent of individual and sectarian financial interests rather than being accountable to citizens as a whole (Picard, 2000: 319). These factors have reduced the state's legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens and have increased *sectarian* loyalties over that of the state.

In contrast, Hizbullah's high quality and corruption-free institutions and its reputation as a reliable organisation have increased its legitimacy in the domestic sphere. As discussed earlier, Hizbullah's social, educational, and health services have motivated the Shiites to transfer their allegiance from the state to the organisation. Yet Hizbullah's reputation as the least corrupt political party is also accepted among those who disagree with its ideologies. Hizbullah media representative, Hussain Naboulsi, describes how Hizbullah eradicated corruption when it took over the Energy and Water portfolio in Cabinet:

When we came to this ministry [energy and water], we saved at least \$100 million per year. How? In the past there were influential figures [in Lebanon] who used to buy oil and then sell it to the government at a very high price. We said stop it. So we went to Kuwait and signed an agreement to receive oil directly from Kuwait to Lebanon. In that case, we saved \$50 million. We have now established a new agreement with Algeria, and again, we save about \$50 million (Naboulsi, 2005).

Even during the chaos of the 2006 war, Hizbullah maintained its squeaky-clean image. After returning to his hometown in the south after the 34 day conflict, one Lebanese shopkeeper found that in the midst of their battles Hizbullah fighters had helped themselves to his stock of groceries – but they duly left receipts which he cashed for US\$1000 at the party's local office (*The Washington Post*, 18 August, 2006). In his examination of the “legitimacy problem” in the Middle East, Hudson (1977) found that the strongest type of legitimacy, structural legitimacy - defined as the reach of government capabilities to rural areas and the ability to perform service as well as extractive functions - is also hardest to attain (1977: 23, 391). Based on this assertion, Hizbullah's high quality institutions and widespread service provision outstrips government functions in terms of practicality and legitimacy. Consequently, Hizbullah's ability to structure a “legitimate” parallel state is increased.

Hizbullah is conscious of maintaining legitimacy in the eyes of its constituents and the wider Lebanese public and adapts its policies to preserve domestic authority. The Israeli occupation of the south (1982-2000) provided the organisation with the political and ideological justification for its monopoly of coercion in the south. Since the Israeli withdrawal, Hizbullah has sought to overcome domestic criticism by focusing on the protection of the Israeli-held Shabaa Farms, and the Lebanese prisoners in Israeli prisons (Saouli, 2003: 3). Hizbullah has deliberately marketed itself as the supreme defender of the national interest since the Israeli pullout. As Hizbullah representative Hussain Naboulsi said in a recent interview, "No other party can really care about Lebanon more than Hizbullah. If you want to know how much we are patriots, think of the blood we have spilled on the soil of Lebanon" (Naboulsi, 2005). Political leaders and parties in the Middle East also enhance their legitimacy by demonstrating their commitment to an all-Arab "core concern", which is currently dominated by Palestine (Hudson, 1977: 5). Hizbullah's current emphasis on the Palestinian issue is illustrative of this legitimising core-concern. In an interview with al-Jazeera television in November 2000, Nasrallah explained that Hizbullah sees itself as the "vanguard" (*tali'a*) of the Palestinian struggle and that the organisation refuses to distinguish between its roles in Lebanon and Palestine, let alone prioritise Lebanon's interests (ICG, Nov 2002: 14).

Hizbullah's efforts to be perceived as a *legitimate* armed group are also evident in its diplomatic relations with the international community. In October 2002, Nasrallah accepted an invitation to the opening ceremony of the Beirut summit of French-speaking states. This was the first time Hizbullah had attended an important international event that was not devoted to the conflict with Israel and is indicative of its

desire to be widely regarded as legitimate (Sobelman, 2004: 19). Hizbullah's policy of "opening-up" (*infatih*) also included opening dialogue with the US. In 2005, Hizbullah party member and Minister of Labour and Agriculture, Trad Hamade, met senior members of the US Administration to discuss the UNSCR 1559 (which stipulates Hizbullah's disarmament) (Alagha, 2007: 59-60). More recently, Hizbullah sent a delegation to a summit of Lebanese political leaders in France to deal with the post-2006 war political deadlock. French Foreign Ministry spokesperson explained why France invited Hizbullah to the summit: "Hizbullah is an important political force in Lebanese life, and we therefore hope it is fully integrated in the political stakes" (*The Daily Star*, July 11, 2007). These moves by Hizbullah are illustrative of its efforts to be seen by the international community as a legitimate national organisation with a political and social agenda – not merely a "terrorist group".

However, the international dimensions of Hizbullah's quest for legitimacy appear to be secondary to the domestic. This could be motivated by a desire not to isolate or antagonise its anti-west allies (Iran and Syria), and an effort not to undermine its own anti-western, anti-Israeli ideology. In comparison to the PLO, Hizbullah's grassroots state building and its "Arab" identity grants it internal legitimacy and greater stability. The PLO's state building involved adopting the norms and "rules" of the dominant state system to achieve international recognition and help to mobilise external (rather than internal) support. The Palestinian group made minimal efforts to gain widespread local backing, and subsequently the PLO became fragmented, decentralised and contested internally (Sayign, 2000: 204-206). Hizbullah, on the other hand, has made a considerable effort to be seen as legitimate in the eyes of its own constituency, the wider Lebanese community, and the region. This has enabled the group to increase its support



base and centralise its state-like structure. This comparison suggests that state-building movements that evolve to fill the void of a weak state are more likely to appeal to the grassroots and form stronger state-like structures. These state-building movements achieve much of the empirical attributes of states, and arguably have more domestic or grassroots legitimacy than the imposed political structure above them.

### **State Building for What Purpose?**

It is difficult to evaluate the domestic motivations of Hizbullah's state building without some discussion of its ultimate objectives. Does it desire to take over the state, and if so, how? Or is it content to exist in an autonomous zone separated from the state? The answers to these questions may be found in Lebanon's history. During the civil war, the Lebanese militias, including Hizbullah, were motivated by either maintaining (Christian) or challenging (Muslim) the status quo. These goals would have been achieved by gaining control of the state and reordering the political relationship between communities. However, the symbiotic relationship between each militia, the (collapsed) state, and the Lebanese community meant that the militias did not attempt to separate from the state<sup>10</sup> (Kingston & Zahar, 2004: 86). This trend is reoccurring with Hizbullah's relationship with the state. Hizbullah's main platform for the 2005 elections was to reform the electoral law to replace the power-sharing model with proportional representation (Alagha, 2007: 43). This would grant Hizbullah, as the largest political party in Lebanon, a greater role in Lebanese politics and therefore increased power and status in the country. Despite the fact that Hizbullah strives to maintain its military and social autonomy in the south, its reliance on the resources of the state, such as

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<sup>10</sup> Militias relied on the resources of the state to provide "sweeteners" to the population from which they required support and capital. These militias also had to negotiate with rival militias to ensure trade routes and access to infrastructure such as ports and airports (Kingston & Zahar, 2004: 85-87).

legitimacy, authority, and material resources suggest that it would be unlikely to attempt to separate from the state in an independent "Hizbullahland".

If Hizbullah does not aim to separate from the state, then its objectives must involve taking over the state – either by force or by democratically altering the balance of power in its favour. A possible cause for Hizbullah's desire for a bigger slice of the Lebanese pie rather than its own sovereign region is the fact that "the state" is such an important entity in the Arab world. Unlike other regions in the developing world (such as Africa), the Middle East has experienced a "hardening" of the state system, whereby the state, even in its weak, oppressive and unrepresentative form, is "here to stay" (Korany, 1987: 47). Recent polls indicate increased loyalty to the state over ethnic or religious communities in the region. A 2005 poll saw a rise in the number of people in the Middle East who identify themselves with the state, and decline in those who identify themselves as Muslims first (Telhami, 2006). As demonstrated by the interconnectedness of militia groups, the community, and the state during the Lebanese civil war, strong political players in the Middle East have become heavily dependent on the resources of the state (Brynen, 1991: 607). In this context, Hizbullah's aim of politically taking over the existing Lebanese state is motivated by a desire to gain access to state goods. Taking the state by force would jeopardise these resources and is therefore a less-favourable outcome. By utilizing a combination of pressure, threats, and political maneuvering, Hizbullah can "democratically" muscle-in on the state, secure access to state goods, increase its influence domestically and regionally, and improve the status of the Shiite community in Lebanon.

If Hizbullah aims to democratically take over the state, what impact will this have on Lebanon? Will the state be strengthened by Hizbullah's state building efforts or will it be weakened? State building in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe involved the obliteration or cooptation of weak political units into stronger, larger units (Tilly 1975: 83-85). If this process is applied to Hizbullah, then Lebanon may cease to exist and Hizbullah may become the "state". However, the state building of post-1945 states is considerably different to that of 17<sup>th</sup> Europe. The most important difference is the strength of the *idea* of the sovereign state (Ayoob, 1995; Buzan 1991). It is inconceivable that "Lebanon" would cease to exist as an independent entity, and so Hizbullah could have to work within the Lebanese "framework" to increase its power. The optimistic view of Hizbullah's challenge to the Lebanese state is that it would force the government to improve its state functions and win back the hearts and minds of the populous. The pessimistic view would see Hizbullah "stealing" the loyalty of citizens, undermining the cohesiveness of the Lebanese state, and potentially sparking the breakdown of the state - as seen in 1975. The process of state development in Europe would certainly indicate the pessimistic view of Hizbullah in Lebanon, but the significant differences in the modern state system may seriously alter the outcome of a sub-state group's challenge to the sovereign state. The Party of God has significantly improved the lives of many Shiites, but at the same time, it reinforces the failure of the state and the destructive sectarian divisions in the country. Hizbullah's state building is still in its relatively early stages, so only time will tell if it will force the Lebanese government to "step up to the plate", or if it will render it defunct.

## Conclusion

In some failed or weak states in the developing world, militarised sub-state groups challenge state authority by establishing parallel state-like structures that perform to a higher standard than the sovereign state. These “state-building movements” are important players in the domestic, regional, and arguably, international arenas, and yet they are not states. This phenomenon can be explained using the broad theoretical perspective of state making. The internal instability that is a feature of many new states is indicative of a process of early state formation. State formation in Europe involved the rise of some political entities at the cost of many others. State units must therefore crush internal rivals and monopolise the means of coercion in order to centralise control and assert authority on the population (Tilly 1975, 1985). This process has been hampered in many new states as the governing authority does not have the empirical attributes required to centralise control (Ayoob, 1995; Cohen *et al*, 1981). This has led to the development of internal, “organic” state-like structures that fill the void of the absent and ineffective state.

This process is currently occurring in Lebanon with the powerful sub-state group, Hizbullah. The failure of the Lebanese state to provide for many of its citizens, its incapacity to wrest back the monopoly of the means of coercion after the civil war, and its inability to prevent internal and external interference has provided room for Hizbullah to develop into a state-building movement. The Party of God maintains its own army and has the monopoly of coercion in the south of Lebanon, it runs its own services and institutions, has established infrastructure and administration, and relies on its semi-autonomous economy. In fact, Hizbullah outmatches the Lebanese state in many of the empirical criteria of a state.

Hizbullah is a direct rival of the Lebanese government because of its state building and yet has (up to now) refrained from attempting to take over the state by force. This is due to the fact that Hizbullah's state building is rooted in domestic politics – it has more to gain by “democratically” (and therefore “legitimately”) muscling-in on the state rather than draining state resources in an all-out confrontation. In this sense, Hizbullah is attempting to absorb the Lebanese state in a similar process of the strong obliterating or co-opting weak political units in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe.

### **Hizbullah's State Building Revisited**

The key foreign policy instrument of Hizbullah's state building is its monopoly of the resistance to Israel. The conflict with Israel provides Hizbullah with the means to build up, train, and professionalise its army, while at the same time providing the legitimacy for the organisation's autonomy in the south and beyond. By emphasising the strength of Hizbullah fighters and the inexperience of the Lebanese Armed Forces, the Islamic group can maintain its independent foreign policy and play a leading role in peace and war in the country. While the withdrawal of Israeli troops undermined Hizbullah's legitimacy as an armed group, regional circumstances such as the Shabaa Farms dispute, the Palestinian conflict, and the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon have provided the pretext and freedom for Hizbullah to reinforce its military independence in Lebanon. On an ideological and political level, the resistance to Israel mobilises the Shiite population – whose support can be seen as the group's most powerful weapon – and deflects any serious criticism from rival sectarian groups. Just as war has been described as the midwife of state making (Tilly, 1985), Hizbullah's state building process is inextricably intertwined with its military struggle with Israel.

As this analysis has shown, Hizbullah's pervasive autonomy and state building activities in the southern regions of Lebanon pose a direct challenge to the state's authority, security, and legitimacy. The government's mediocre military capabilities and the absence of government institutions in the south indicate that Hizbullah is in a favourable position to expand its state building at the cost of the Lebanese state. Hizbullah's army has achieved a level of military capacity and tactical sophistication that outmatches the state's counterpart. Likewise, Hizbullah's success in maintaining external alliances, penetrating the political realm, and displacing the state as the primary service provider is further indicative of its strength as a state-building movement. Importantly, the availability of financial and other assistance from external sources (such as Iran and Syria) has lessened the need for Hizbullah to engage in struggles with domestic actors (including the Lebanese state) to extract revenue for state building. These factors illustrate that Hizbullah is in a favourable position to further undermine the Lebanese government's legitimacy through its state building activities.

The roots of Hizbullah's success are deep in the fabric of Lebanon's state and society. Hizbullah owes much of its appeal to the fact that it has been able to outstrip the government in the delivery of social services in Muslim-dominated areas. By providing health care, education, welfare, and employment, Hizbullah has established a broad constituency and has won the hearts and minds of the Shiite (and in some cases, non-Shiite) population. Many Shiites have subsequently transferred their allegiance to Hizbullah rather than the state - which is seen as corrupt and unrepresentative of their needs. This support legitimises Hizbullah state building and provides the fuel to challenge the government through social and political rather than coercive means. The Party of God's state-like infrastructure also underlines and enhances its legitimacy as a

*bona fide* Lebanese political and social party, rather than a “terrorist” or insurgent group. Hizbullah has essentially won a grassroots struggle with the state. Its services, infrastructure, and administration undercut government authority and provide fuel for the necessary support for its state building venture.

### **Empirical and Theoretical Implications**

What does this mean for both Hizbullah and international relations theory? The first theoretical implication of this study is the importance of sub-state units as providers of “the good life” in new states. The suggestion that actors from the “periphery” are much more important than many scholars give them credit for is highlighted by a number of authors (Kingston & Spears, 2004; Lister & Wilder, 2005, Migdal, 2001). However, I contend that many have not gone far enough. While armed sub-state groups can be theorised as insurgent groups that aim to disrupt, takeover, or separate from the state, Hizbullah occupies a political, social, and military position that extends far beyond any traditional definition of sub-state groups. The symbiotic relationship between the organisation and its populous is closer to that of a state than an insurgent group or social movement and therefore Hizbullah can be best understood as a state-building movement. Hizbullah's state making is illustrative of its desire to alter the balance of power in the country rather than splitting from the state in the form of “Hizbullahland”. By creating facts on the ground, Hizbullah can muscle-in on state resources, increase its strength and support base, and express its legitimacy as a Lebanese party. State-building movements such as Hizbullah challenge the Weberian understanding of the “state” by their sharp and favourable contrast to the “judicial states” in the developing world.

Some would argue that Hizbullah cannot be understood as a state-building movement because it does not satisfy some of the requirements of the sovereign state. For example, one of the fundamental features of the Weberian state is the ability to define and secure its borders over a relatively homogenous population. As discussed in chapter three, the rural migration that occurred in Lebanon in the 1960-1970s led to the dispersal of the Shiites from the south and the Becaa Valley to the southern suburbs of Beirut. The Shiite population remains dispersed and thus the lack of homogenous territory would prevent Hizbullah ever becoming an actual "state" in the Weberian sense (Kingston & Zahar, 2004: 86-87). Generous financing from Iran also shields the groups from the Weberian requirement of providing services in exchange for taxation (to fund war activities). While Hizbullah may not satisfy all the characteristics of a Weberian state, the same could be said of other states in the developing world. Many new states lack many of the marks and merits that make up sovereign statehood. This suggests that traditional theoretical understandings of the "state" are not necessarily indicative of post-1945 states.

### **The Future of Hizbullah**

How then does the theoretical and empirical evidence provided in this thesis assist in anticipating Hizbullah's trajectory in Lebanon? The difficulty in studying Hizbullah's challenge to the Lebanese government is that the group rarely indicates what its objectives in Lebanon really are. Unlike insurgent groups who seek to either take over or separate from the state, Hizbullah's state building requires it to play the "political game" – in which the group uses the propaganda tools of "national unity" rather than discussing "Hizbullahland" (Zisser, 2000: 10). Hizbullah's political objective of replacing the consociational system of government with a majoritarian one indicates



that the organisation intends to alter the balance of power in its favour. Up to now, this objective has been focused on non-coercive methods, but recent regional changes may give Hizbullah the opportunity to overtly challenge the government. Hizbullah's increased operational freedom brought about by the Syrian withdrawal has allowed it to take to the political stage with determination and purpose. Its greater role in government shields Hizbullah from international interference while at the same time helps to deflect any serious internal political challenge. It is as yet unclear what effect the 2006 conflict with Israel will have on Hizbullah's operational freedom and willingness to use coercive tactics to improve its position in Lebanon. In November 2006, Secretary-General Nasrallah told an audience of over 7,000 that:

The current government will have to go and will be replaced by a pure government that will help you [the people of South Lebanon] to repair the damage caused by Israeli aggression.... The current government is disloyal, since it knew about the [Israeli] aggression in advance, and asked them to prolong their aggression... This government will not stay in power. We will form a new government (MEMRI, Nov 21, 2006).

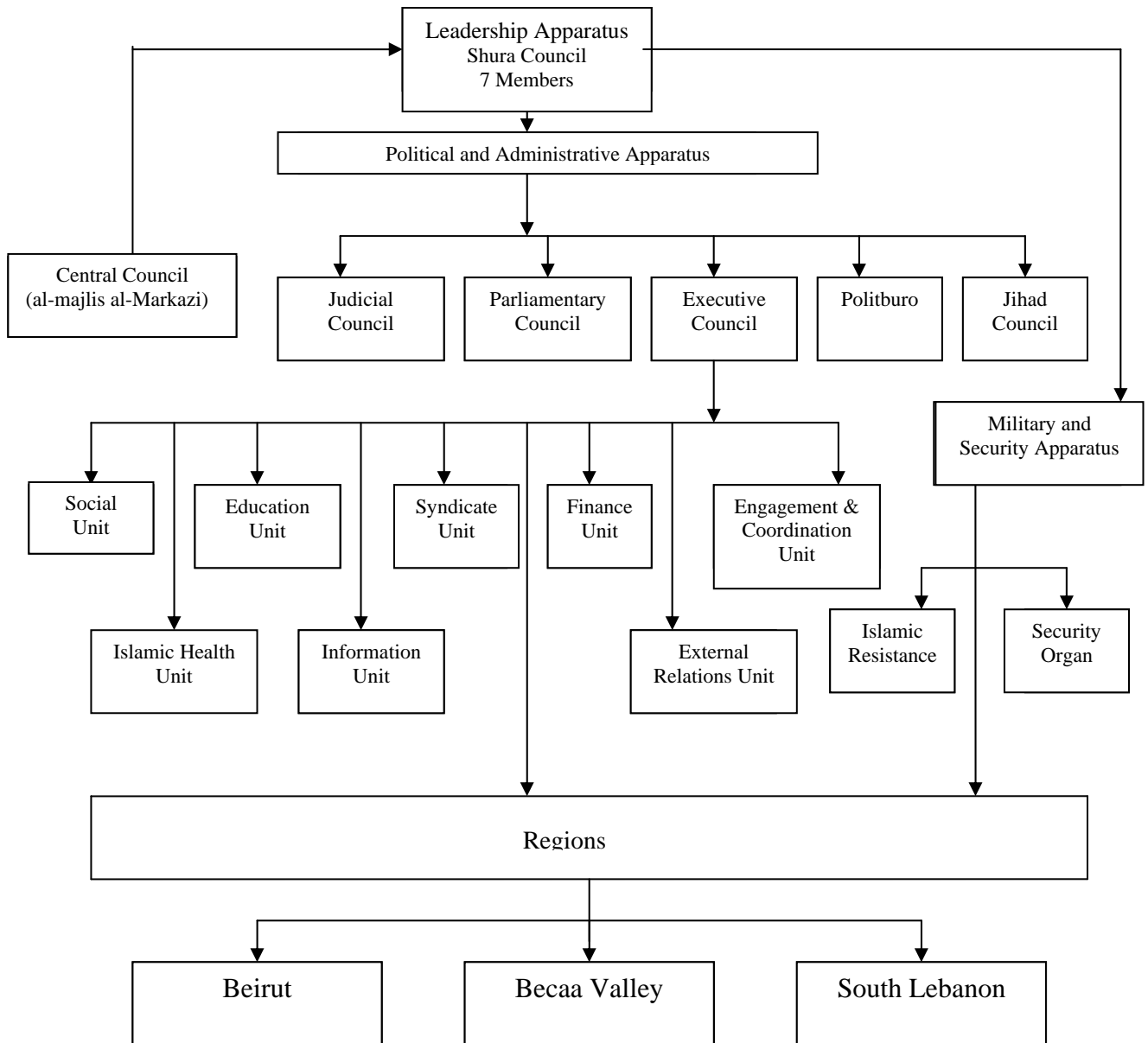
Perhaps the group is merely waiting for the right moment to launch a political attack on the government with the hope of gaining power through legitimate, democratic means. On the other hand, the inherent threat in this speech suggests that the organisation may use coercive methods of achieving its aims if it feels strong enough. What is clear, however, is that Hizbullah's challenge to the government - in whatever form it may take in the future - is a significant threat to the Lebanese state. Unless Lebanon improves its military capacity and reinstates government institutions in Hizbullah-dominated regions, it is unlikely the government will have the strength to overcome Hizbullah. The first step toward undermining Hizbullah might be to remove the organisation's justification for its monopoly of coercion in the south. If Israel unilaterally withdrew from all Lebanese territories Hizbullah would be in a very weak domestic position to justify its autonomy of arms. In the same respect, a peace treaty with Israel and Hizbullah's logistical

supporter Syria, could spell the end of the group as a formidable armed movement. However, as this thesis has shown, Hizbullah is a domestic actor focused on Lebanese objectives. The best way to counter Hizbullah would therefore be to attack its state-like Achilles Heel – its legitimacy. As chapter six demonstrates, Hizbullah is very conscious about maintaining domestic legitimacy. Removing the factors that provide the organisation with legitimacy – such as its social services and its resistance to Israeli occupation – could be the only successful method of de-clawing the group. Lebanon will have to crack down on corruption, replace Hizbullah institutions with state-run ones, and win back the loyalty of the people if it ever hopes to neutralise Hizbullah. Whatever the Lebanese government's strategy, it is likely that the Party of God will have the starring role in the next chapter of the Lebanon's history. As Hizbullah spokesman Hussien Naboulsi states,

When the whole world was against us we were few, we were steadfast, determined, and we saw real hope that we would win one day. The time came when we won. Now, only part of the world is against us and we are even stronger – we are now a big society, and we are now represented in the Parliament. They couldn't defeat us when we were weak, can they defeat us when we are strong? (Naboulsi, 2005).

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Hizbullah's Organisational Structure



Source: Hamzeh, Ahmad Nizar, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, New York: Syracuse University Press (2004), pp. 46.

## Appendix 2: Map of Lebanon



Courtesy of The General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin

Base 802856AI (C00059) 5-02

Source: International Crisis Group, 'Hizbollah and the Lebanese Crisis', *Crisis Group Middle East Report N°69*, 10 October 2007, pp: 25.

### **Appendix 3: Transcript of interview with Director of Hizbullah Media Relations, Hussein Naboulsi**

*Beirut, Monday November 21, 2005*

*From Hizbullah's point of view, do you think there has been a significant change in Lebanon since the death of Rafiq Hariri?*

There has been a big change, a big, big change. We have seen the end of the Syrian mandate in Lebanon, people are very happy. But now we have a problem because the region is on the edge on explosion. Hariri's death was a real turning point in Lebanon, a real earthquake. When Bashir Gemayal [former President of Lebanon during the end of the civil war] was assassinated, people were in shock. But when Hariri died, it was devastating for the country. He was a national figure, very wealthy and an international figure.

*How do you think the withdrawal of Syria will affect Lebanon?*

The whole region is shaking because Syria has been accused of killing Hariri. The US and the UN have told Syria to comply to the needs of the investigation, but what if they don't comply? There could be problems for Lebanon because we are so near to Syria. Lebanon used to be the ones being watched – but now we are the ones doing the watching.

*Do you think that there is a chance for a return to internal violence in Lebanon?*

Because Lebanon is a sectarian society, and because every sect depends on another country to survive, there is no real trust in Lebanon. Because if there is no trust, it means that there is no real unity. I think now that those big countries that had interest in Lebanon, or they has interest in waging war between the Lebanese for the sake of Israel, so that Israel can be secure, there is no indication that those countries are in the mood to make another war in Lebanon. Their priorities are different and I think most countries priority is the region, and I think in particular, Syria.

The circumstances for war in 1975, do not exist in 2005. On top of that, there is no real major party in Lebanon that can wage war against another party. Secondly, if you went to every Lebanese party, they would tell you that we have learned a lot from our past. A new war is not going to happen anymore – we might have political fights, but not military fights at all.

War in Lebanon is in the interest in Syria because if there is a war in Lebanon it means that Syria can interfere again. Now the priorities are totally different, and Lebanon is no longer the focus. Lebanon could be the base, could be the reason, could be the cause, but its not going to witness any new kind of civil war in Lebanon.

*Has the Syrian withdrawal impacted Hizbullah a great deal? Has the structure of the party changed since it withdrawal, and so they still support you from abroad?*

The problem is that when they speak about Hizbullah, and the relationship between Hizbullah and Syria, they think Hizbullah is a toy in Syrian hands. This is not the case

at all. We have a very strong structure, we have a very strong leader, we have very strong independent decisions. And we know the Lebanese interests, we know the regional interests and we know the Lebanese arena very well and we know how to behave and play in a very wise way. When we say the interests, we do believe that it is in the best interests of Lebanon to have an excellent relationship with Syria. We believe that now the region is facing a new conspiracy from Israel and America, to undermine the last stronghold that says no to Israel and no to America.

The main issue in the American agenda is Syria and Hizbullah; more specifically it is Hizbullah. I tell you, after 9/11, they came to us, mediators sent by the Americans. They told us; “this is a blank check”, it was a tempting offer... “fill it, any number, billions of dollars. We want only something from you; we want a small piece of paper saying that we are going to stop fighting Israel.

*Did they want you to disarm completely or just to stop the attacks?*

Just to back off and we can have as much as we want in Lebanon; ministers, blah blah blah. Secretary General [Nasrallah] stood up and said, “we are not going to betray the blood of our martyrs”, and the meeting was over. It was very swift, he gave them a very prompt answer, but the next time they came to us, you know what they said? They said, “ok, this is two billion dollars, we only want something from you, don’t use your rockets”. This is real!! Don’t use your rockets against Israel. The answer was negative, as usual.

Before the Syrian withdrawal (and this was said by Hassan Nasrallah and recently by Bashar Assad), he said, the Americans came to him and told him [Assad] that you are free to stay in Lebanon as much as you like, but disarm the resistance. So he took the other decision, and he withdrew from Lebanon and he told us what the Americans asked him to do. America doesn’t really care about independence, sovereignty, prosperity, development, they only care about one important thing – Israel. Now they think, ok, if Syria had agreed to disarm Hizbullah, we wouldn’t see [UN Security Council Resolution] 1559.

*So this discussion between Assad and the Americans must have taken place in early 2004?*

Yes it was before 1559. So now Syria is now facing the international community because of one thing; because of the resistance. So its very normal that we, Hizbullah, became allied to Syria and we are not behaving according to our interests. We are widely thinking for the best interests of Lebanon. As I said before, it is in our best interests to make the best relations with Syria. When you see a country that is willing to face the international community because of the resistance, we have to do the least we can towards this country. Establish excellent relations with Syrian instead of launching a war of words against Syria for the sake of America or Israel. I tell you, America never, never, never has the interests of any country. It only cares about itself and Israel.

*But could you say that Syria acts with its own interests as well?*

I think that within the Syrian leadership there are certain priorities. One of those priorities is to protect Syria and the resistance in Lebanon from any enemy from outside, especially from Israel and America. Of course, like any country, it has many priorities on its agenda, once you see that this item is on the top of the agenda, you can

feel secure that those people are working for the real sovereignty and independence of both countries. Assad said it very clearly, “we have made mistakes in Lebanon”, and they have made mistakes in Lebanon they were not angels and they had many corrupt figures in Lebanon, but this has nothing to do with the strategic planning – the real agenda. If Lebanon can stand strongly on the side of Syria we can see America backing off and they can do nothing. America is using the Lebanese arena to construct conspiracies against Syria. This is very clear, I think.

We have to be real men and think in a very wise way; if some believe that it's time to end the Syrian influence in Lebanon by depending on the American power, I think it is a mistake. We would end the Syrian influence and bring the American influence. And we don't think America cares about any country, and I tell you, if there was no oil in the Gulf, so you think American would care about Gulf States, of course not!

*So lets bring it back to Lebanon, Hizbullah did well in the recent elections, can you tell me more about that and how this has changed Hizbullah's role?*

First of all, the electoral law in Lebanon doesn't meet the needs of the Lebanese. We believe that the best way for all the Lebanese to be represented in the parliament is using proportionate representation law. That means that if you and I were competing in the elections, and you got 60 and I got 40, you win and I lose. In this law, if you get 51 and I get 49, you win and I lose. Proportional representation means all Lebanese get represented. Hizbullah believes that Lebanon should be one circle. That means that I can vote for an MP in Tripoli [in the north], and a man in Tripoli can vote for an MP in the south. This way we can make parties so parties can compete, not sects. Which is the best way, but they say, we want proportionate representation but lets make it in the province, not the country.

The issue is that we still have sectarian mentality. And a sectarian mentality will never allow prosperity and development. We are weak like this – in the cabinet we fight, it is as if five or six countries met in the cabinet and each had its own agenda. It is really stupid. If you really want to make Lebanon strong and united, how is this possible when we don't even agree on the priorities?

We, the Lebanese, as individuals, great! As individuals we go outside Lebanon and we are the best, most successful businessmen in the world. We have large communities wherever you go. The Lebanese think like the individual; it is my family, my village, my town. Even in one building, for example, as you know, Lebanese are really clean and neat blah blah blah, they care a lot about their look etc, but in one building, everyone cares about their own apartment and they don't care about the communal areas like the stairs or the elevators. This is part of our mentality. Instead of cleaning the communal areas that would benefit all of us, we only care about ourselves. As individuals Lebanese are warm and friendly and hospitable, but when it comes to collective work, I don't know what happens!

*So you have never learnt to work together?*

Exactly. Lebanese are really strong as individuals, but not as groups.

Ok, there are parties inside Lebanon who are calling Hizbullah to disarm, so you think it would be a step in the right direction for Hizbullah to disarm and become a complete political party and join Lebanon, so to speak.

No other party can really care about Lebanon more than Hizbullah. If you want to know how much we are patriots, think of the blood we have spilled on the soil of Lebanon. We have sacrificed our martyrs in order to protect and liberate Lebanon. Fighting and resisting is not a picnic – you have death waiting for you. In order to choose this path, you must be real strong, faithful and have trust in God. You must be loyal to your country. A mercenary cannot do such a thing. You have to have that faith and that belief that you are working for your country. When others were in France enjoying themselves on the beach in Niece, or walking the cornich in Geneva, we were down in the south fighting for a cause. They were waiting for us to liberate Lebanon and then come back – it's a hotel, Lebanon is hotel to them.

When others were fighting each other in the civil war, Hizbullah had no part in the civil war. If the resistance did not exist, what would happen to Lebanon? It would be under Israel control. After the liberation, everyone became proud to say we are Lebanese.

*To try and achieve this unity that Lebanon desperately needs, do you think it's important for Hizbullah to relinquish some of its social power and responsibility and allow the Lebanese government to step in? For example, rather than disarming, having a Hizbullah battalion in the south, but one that has a national stamp on it?*

First of all, we are not a visible military presence – there is a presence of Lebanese Army and security forces. In the past when we talked about national history, we have taught the whole world a new experience. Our experience is the connection between resistance, people and government. This equation worked in Lebanon successfully, so why should we relinquish it.

*But based on what you were saying earlier, which is that Lebanon has never experienced such a change as it has in 2005, do you agree that it is perhaps time for Hizbullah to change also?*

There are things that have changed not in Lebanon, not in the region, but in the whole world, but we did not change. Not because we are stubborn, but because we believe in our cause and we think we are right. We are behaving in accordance with the UN charter that gave us the right to defend ourselves. We are abiding by the international law.

*Well now that Israel has withdrawn and is no longer in Lebanese territory, couldn't you argue that maintaining the resistance is actually going against international law?*

The UN has nothing to do with when two countries agree on something. The UN only has to bless such a thing. The Lebanese and Syria have agreed from the very beginning that the Shabaa Farms [a contested region at the border of Syria, Lebanon and Israel] belong to Lebanon. The Israelis have withdrawn from Lebanon, but they left Shabaa Farms under occupation. If they really want us to stop fighting them, they should end their occupation of the Shabaa Farms. So we are going to continue like this – abiding by the international law and we are not going to abandon the legitimate way of our activities; we don't have any branches outside Lebanon as some accuse us, we don't have any activity outside the border of Lebanon at all. From the very beginning to this moment we are focussing on one thing; the Israeli occupation of Lebanon. And because of that, we succeeded.



*It seems that Hizbullah has done all that it can to distance itself from Lebanese politicians, but do you think that now the time has come to merge all Hizbullah with the rest of the Lebanese community?*

When we joined the government recently, we hold two posts, the Energy and Water Ministry, and the Labour Ministry, I remember a journalist from AL-Jazeera call me and saying, 'oh, good news, at least we wont see stealing in these ministries.' They know that we are clean. When we came to this ministry [energy and water], we saved at least \$100 million per year. How? In the past there were influential figures who used to buy the oil and then sell it to the government at a very high price. We said stop it; so we went to Kuwait and signed an agreement to receive oil directly from Kuwait to Lebanon. In that case, we saved \$50 million. We have now established a new agreement with Algeria, and again, we save about \$50 million.

*So where do you see Hizbullah's future?*

In the past we were few people, and the whole world was against us – we were not even accepted in Lebanon. And we reached a point, that in 1993 when the whole world decided to eradicate us, and the same in 1996 during the Grapes of Wrath, the more they attack us and aspire against us, the more we become stronger and stronger and stronger. When the whole world was against us we were few, we were steadfast, determined, and we saw real hope that we would win one day. The time came when we won. Now, only part of the world is against us and we are even stronger – we are now a big society, we are now represented in the parliament. So they couldn't defeat us when we were weak, can they defeat us when we are strong?

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