

**LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**

There is no God but God: Hamas and Hezbollah between  
Ideology and Pragmatism

By

Gida Maher Ghandour

A thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the  
degree of Masters of Arts in International Affairs

School of Arts and Sciences  
May 2014



**Lebanese American University**

School of Arts in Sciences; Beirut Campus

### THESIS APPROVAL FORM

Student Name: Gida Ghandour I.D. #: 200103467

Thesis Title: There is No God but God: Hamas and Hezbollah between Ideology and Moderation

Program: MA in International Affairs

Department: Social Sciences

School: Arts and Sciences

The undersigned certify that they have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis and approved it in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Arts in International Affairs**.

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Bassel F. Salloukh

Signature

Date 26/5/14

Committee Member: Dr. Sami Baroudi

Signature

Date

Committee Member: Dr. Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss Signature

Date 26 May 2014



## THESIS COPYRIGHT RELEASE FORM

### LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY NON-EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTION LICENSE

By signing and submitting this license, you (the author(s) or copyright owner) grants to Lebanese American University (LAU) the non-exclusive right to reproduce, translate (as defined below), and/or distribute your submission (including the abstract) worldwide in print and electronic format and in any medium, including but not limited to audio or video. You agree that LAU may, without changing the content, translate the submission to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation. You also agree that LAU may keep more than one copy of this submission for purposes of security, backup and preservation. You represent that the submission is your original work, and that you have the right to grant the rights contained in this license. You also represent that your submission does not, to the best of your knowledge, infringe upon anyone's copyright. If the submission contains material for which you do not hold copyright, you represent that you have obtained the unrestricted permission of the copyright owner to grant LAU the rights required by this license, and that such third-party owned material is clearly identified and acknowledged within the text or content of the submission. IF THE SUBMISSION IS BASED UPON WORK THAT HAS BEEN SPONSORED OR SUPPORTED BY AN AGENCY OR ORGANIZATION OTHER THAN LAU, YOU REPRESENT THAT YOU HAVE FULFILLED ANY RIGHT OF REVIEW OR OTHER OBLIGATIONS REQUIRED BY SUCH CONTRACT OR AGREEMENT. LAU will clearly identify your name(s) as the author(s) or owner(s) of the submission, and will not make any alteration, other than as allowed by this license, to your submission.

Name: Gida Ghandou

Signature:

Date: 28/05/2014



## PLAGIARISM POLICY COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

I certify that:

- I have read and understood LAU's Plagiarism Policy.
- I understand that failure to comply with this Policy can lead to academic and disciplinary actions against me.
- This work is substantially my own, and to the extent that any part of this work is not my own I have indicated that by acknowledging its sources.

Name: Gida Ghandou

Signature:

Date: 28/05/2024

*To My Father ...*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the support of many people. Many thanks to my advisor, Dr. Bassel F. Salloukh without whom the completion of this thesis would have been hardly possible. Thank you for all the support!

A big Thank you goes to all the members of my family, starting with Mum & Dad who really supported me both emotionally and financially throughout the past five years; I couldn't have done it without you. A big Thank you goes to my brothers; to my dear husband Walid who thoroughly pushed me to complete my thesis.

A big Thank you goes to my best friend Hani Anouti who backed me up throughout this endeavor.

Thank you Rania, Khatib and Larine for always being there and attending my defense.

To my son, Karim, I love you and wish you a lifetime of happiness topped not only with a Master's degree but also a PHD.

This has been a very long path but this is also an end for a new beginning.

# There is No God but God: Hamas and Hezbollah between Ideology and Moderation

Gida Maher Ghandour

## ABSTRACT

In recent years, scholarship on political Islam has shifted from exploring the compatibility between Islam and democracy towards more empirical studies revolving around the democratic commitments of Islamists. The moderation theory suggests that Islamist parties may become more moderate as a result of their inclusion in pluralist political processes. This thesis tests the cases of Hamas and Hezbollah against the inclusion-moderation theory. Can Islamist groups change their ideologies and behavior because of political participation? How does change occur and what are the tools, mechanisms and institutions that shape their moderation? Alternatively, is moderation instrumental and used for purely tactical reasons? This thesis argues that the literature on the moderation of Islamist parties is preoccupied with mainly endogenous variables. The latter helps explain the political and ideological side of the moderation of radical Islamist parties. By contrast, using Hamas and Hezbollah as case studies, this thesis argues that exogenous, namely geopolitical, factors also play an important role in whether or not radical Islamist parties choose to moderate their positions, especially vis-à-vis demobilizing their military wings and integrating fully into the political process.

*Keywords:* Islamist, Moderation, Hamas, Hezbollah, Geopolitics, Arab Uprisings

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
<b>I. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Literature Review.....	3
1.3 Research Questions.....	6
1.4 Methodology.....	7
1.5 Map of the Thesis.....	8
<b>II. Revisiting the Inclusion-Moderation Theory.....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1- Introduction.....	10
2.2- Unpacking Moderation.....	11
2.3- Defining the Inclusion-Moderation Theory.....	15
2.3.1- The Behavioral Moderation of Groups.....	16
2.3.2- Ideological Moderation of Groups.....	19
2.3.3- Ideological Moderation of Individuals.....	23
2.4- Conclusion.....	26
<b>III. The Influence of the Geopolitical Variables on Hamas's.....</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1- Introduction.....	27
3.2- Hamas's Beginnings.....	28
3.3- The Rise of Hamas.....	30
3.4- Uncertain Democracy.....	33
3.5- Hamas in Power.....	37
3.6- Geopolitics and Hamas's Moderation.....	45
3.7- Conclusion.....	49
<b>IV. Geopolitic's and Hezbollah's Moderation.....</b>	<b>50</b>
4.1- Introduction.....	50
4.2- Hezbollah's Origins.....	51
4.3-The Pre-Inclusion Phase.....	56
4.4-The Transition Phase.....	57
4.5- The Inclusion Phase.....	61
4.5.1- Hezbollah and the Political System.....	64
4.5.2- The Era of the Political Programmes.....	66
4.6- Geopolitics and the Path towards Moderation.....	69
4.6.1- The Dynamic Duo: Syria and Hezbollah.....	70
4.6.2-Hezbollah a proxy for Iran?.....	72
4.7-Conclusion.....	74
<b>V. Hamas, Hezbollah and the Arab Spring.....</b>	<b>66</b>
5.1-Recapping the Argument.....	66
5.2-Hezbollah and Hamas and the Arab Spring.....	80



**Bibliography.....86**

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIS	Armed Islamic Group (GIA, al-Jama'ah <i>al-Islamiyah al-Musallaha</i> )
ISLAH	Islah or Al-Islah (الإصلاح, إصلاح) - Reform
AMAL	Afwaj Al-Mouqawama Al-Lubnaniyya (Battalions of the Lebanese Resistance)
FIS	Islamic Action Front (Jabhat al-'Amal al-Islami)
GIA	Groupe Islamique Arme
HAMAS	Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamah al-'Islāmiyyah,
PLO	Palestinian National Authority
PNC	Palestinian National Council

## LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

### I. List of tables:

Table 4.1      Hezbollah organizational chart for social services

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

### **1.1 Introduction:**

In recent years, scholarship on political Islam has shifted from exploring the compatibility between Islam and democracy towards more empirical studies revolving around the democratic commitments of Islamists and the sincerity of their discourse. Scholars are no longer interested in looking at core Islamic beliefs and evaluating whether they could coexist with democracy. More important is the analysis of the wide variety of Islamists, ranging from the hip moderate young Muslim to the radical salafi, especially with respect to opposing or coping with liberal democratic reforms. What will definitely help in evaluating the sincerity of Islamists' discourse is the current wave of protests that spread in the Arab World since January 2011. How they behaved politically determines in great part the prospects of the Arab Spring in Egypt, Tunisia or even Syria. The wave of popular protests that exploded in the Arab World and Islamists reaction to them is bound to play an important role in the future of Islamist parties. It is also a test for the inclusion-moderation hypothesis whereby one can determine whether the inclusion of those political parties paved the way to their moderation.

Although Lebanon and the Palestinian Occupied Territories have not been experiencing the same level of unrest as their neighbors, both Hamas and Hezbollah are not immune to the repercussions of the Arab Spring. Hamas is

experiencing a rift between its exiled leadership and its leadership in Gaza over the organization's future strategy in the wake of the popular uprising of the Arab Spring and the electoral success of the Islamists in the elections. Hezbollah, though at the outset happy with Husni Mubarak's departure, also fears that the Arab Spring has changed the geopolitical game in the region. Hezbollah's physical dominion is not at risk if Assad remains in power, but regime change in Syria will change their geopolitical landscape. How will Hezbollah react if the Syrian regime falls and will Hamas attempt to extricate itself from the alliance with Iran and realign with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood?

This thesis suggests testing the cases of Hamas and Hezbollah against the inclusion-moderation theory: that political groups and individuals may become more moderate as a result of their inclusion in pluralist political processes (Schwedler). In other words, can Islamist groups change their ideologies and behavior as a result of political participation? How does change occur and what are the tools, mechanisms and institutions that shape their moderation? Or, alternatively is moderation instrumental and used for purely tactical reasons? This thesis argues that the literature on the moderation of Islamist parties is preoccupied with mainly endogenous variables. The latter help explain the political and ideological side of the moderation of radical Islamist parties. By contrast, using Hamas and Hezbollah as case studies, this thesis argues that exogenous, namely geopolitical, factors also play an important role in whether or not radical Islamist parties choose to moderate their positions, especially vis-à-vis demobilizing their military wings and integrating fully into the political process.

## **1.2 Literature Review:**

The 1980s was the era of Islamist groups. However, none of them had the same impact that Hamas and Hezbollah have had whether on the local, regional and international arenas. Hezbollah and Hamas gained their fame by resorting to militancy. The dissonance they created, at a later stage, between their ideology, on the one hand, and their political pragmatism, on the other, left many scholars, writers and journalists surprised.

Previous studies have focused on Hezbollah and Hamas's militancy or the inconsistency between their ideology, on the one hand, and their responses to the shift which occurred in the local and regional political scene, on the other one. While some viewed their moderation as being behavioral, thus instrumental, others perceived it as being driven by purely ideological changes. Jillian Schwedler (2009) revisits the inclusion-moderation hypothesis with respect to political Islam and explores the concept of moderation. Schwedler emphasizes the behavioral moderation of groups, ideological moderation of groups, and ideological moderation of individuals. She concludes by putting the different variants of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis under test. Her three models apply to much of the literature that is used throughout this thesis.

Augustus Richard Norton's work (2007) examines Hezbollah's ideological transformation from a radical party to a political player. He acknowledges that Hezbollah has moderated its ideology in order to enter the political scene. Despite the many discrepancies that lies between Hezbollah's ideology and pragmatism, he

argues that the opportunity to participate in politics tends to encourage pragmatism and compromise. Ahmad Nizar Hamze holds a completely different viewpoint. In his *In the Path of Hezbollah* (2004), he studies the structure of Hezbollah in order to show that there is a strong correlation between Hezbollah's tactical pragmatism and its major goal, namely seizing power and establishing an Islamic state. Unlike Norton, Hamze believes that Hezbollah's ideology and its pragmatism cannot be reconciled. Moreover, he attributes this pragmatism and the policy of "*enfitah*" to the shifting balance of power within the Iranian leadership. He emphasizes Hezbollah's Islamic judicial ideology that, not only provides a source of Islamic legislation, but also reflects temporary flexibility in the face of transformation.

Joseph Eli Alagha (2006) studies how Hezbollah's identity as an "Islamic Jihadi Movement" changed from being an exclusivist religious ideology, to a more encompassing political ideology, to finally becoming a pragmatic political program. His findings suggest that the shifts in Hezbollah's ideology are due to the alteration that occurred on the local, regional and international scene. He asserts that Hezbollah is persistent about pursuing a moderate political program while keeping its doctrines in sight. Consequently, and "from time to time" Hezbollah puts its ideology aside by following a dynamic program that is very far from rigidity. Although Alagha analyses the shift from ideology to pragmatism and differentiates Hezbollah's "*thawabit*" (constants), unchanged principles, from the alteration in Islamic principles however he fails to acknowledge that this transition, though temporary, is also instrumental.

Amal Saad Ghorayeb acknowledges Hezbollah's success in creating a balance between its intellectual structure and political discourse, for the time being, but thinks that the party will have to tip the balance in favor of one or another (2002). Ghorayeb concludes her study of Hezbollah by explaining that the party has chosen to give its Lebanese identity and role as an influential political force secondary status to its Islamic identity.

Avraham Sela and Shaul Meshal share the same vision towards Hamas. In their book *The Palestinian Hamas* they aim to show that Hamas's ideology and its long-term goals do not oppose its participation in the political process. In addition, Gunning studies the movement's "success" in the political arena, showing that religion, violence and democracy are not totally contradictory. Shai Gruber (2007) explores the relationship and tensions between ideology and realpolitik in Hamas's decision making. He outlines Hamas's positions and actions in the past and demonstrates that Hamas is flexible to a certain degree in the implementation of its ideology (2007). Gruber once again fails to question the sincerity of this discourse on the long run.

Matthew Levit shares a completely different viewpoint towards Hamas: he is more categorical towards this Islamic party. Throughout his book, *Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (2006) he questions how it is possible for a group that operates terror cells and espouses political violence to become a ruling political party and asserts that Hamas will never undergo an ideological transformation. Furthermore, he demonstrates that there are no differences between Hamas's armed wing and its so-called political wing. For him



Hamas remains the one and only extension of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the occupied territories.

This thesis argues that Hamas and Hezbollah's moderation and inclusion is only instrumental, as they cannot have a dual commitment towards "God" on the one hand and "people" on the other one. I attempt to do so by describing Hamas and Hezbollah's ideologies and charters and by shedding light on the impact of geopolitics on their pragmatic transformation. Therefore, the purpose of my thesis is threefold. First it aims to examine both parties' transformation in order to see to which extent they were able to moderate. Second, it attempts to argue that moderation is only instrumental as the geopolitical variable may play a significant role in influencing both parties' moderation. Third, it emphasizes on the role of geopolitical influences in such alterations, as domestic variables are no longer the only determinants of inclusion and consequently moderation.

### **1.3 Research Questions:**

How did Hamas and Hezbollah change their ideologies in order to reach political pragmatism? The first question is essential in the sense that it will allow us to understand the dynamics leading both Hamas and Hezbollah to moderation. Even if both parties were aiming to be included respectively in government this does not mean they followed the same mechanisms to reach their goals. By answering this question I assess how both Hamas and Hezbollah have tried to adjust to political developments, which necessitated a reformulation of their positions and intellectual structures. It is by comparing and contrasting the means

used by both parties that I will show how two radical religious parties have tried to adjust to changing circumstances. The politically exclusive and intolerant tones that they used eventually paved the way towards a more inclusive and conciliatory discourse.

The domestic variable surely helped in the shift to pragmatism but is it the only important explanatory variable? And what is the role of geopolitics in this regard? This thesis suggests that the purported ideological moderation is simply instrumental, dictated by changing geopolitical conditions. Both Hamas and Hezbollah debated for a long period of time whether to participate or not respectively in the Palestinian and Lebanese governments that they had described earlier as corrupt. In 1992 however, Hezbollah decided to participate in the electoral cycle. One of the most influential Shi'a clerics, Sayed Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, had espoused a pro-election position for years. He argued that gradual reformation was necessary in the Lebanese context because Islamic rule was simply impossible in the diverse Lebanese society. In 2006, Hamas followed Hezbollah with shocking electoral victory. Later events such as the 2008/2009 Hamas Israeli conflicts and Hezbollah's military take-over of Beirut in 2008 show however, that both parties might not have embraced the democratic process wholeheartedly.

#### **1.4 Methodology:**

A comparative approach is used throughout the thesis in order to determine the differences and similarities shaping Hamas and Hezbollah's path towards moderation. Relying on domestic variables alone cannot explain moderation

however. Therefore, I will attempt to do so by focusing also and more particularly on the geopolitical variables' effects and role in moderating Islamist parties.

The challenge lies in attempting to write the thesis by using a perspective that has not been portrayed before. Many scholars have revisited the inclusion-moderation theory with respect to political Islam. This thesis emphasizes the external dynamics or geopolitical variables effect on the inclusion-moderation theory for a better understanding of Islamists' moderation. No one can deny Iran or the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's influence respectively on Hezbollah and Hamas. In fact, when looking at the Iran-Hezbollah relation, one cannot neglect the fact that Hezbollah's allegiance is directed to the *faqih*, on account of his transnational authority, but also to the revolutionary state he officially heads (Ghorayeb 2002). Nor can anyone neglect the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood on Hamas, on the one hand, in addition to its relation with Iran at a certain point in time. A strong affinity exists between Iran and Hamas, not only with respect to financing the latter but also by virtue of the Palestinian cause that is essentially an Islamic one. The factions' relation with external entities is mostly intellectual but it also reflects on its political choices. My aim is to concentrate on the intellectual bonding in order to explain political actions.

The political discourse is gathered from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include part of Hamas and Hezbollah's public speeches made by high-ranking officials. Secondary sources are gathered from Hamas and Hezbollah's media (i.e; television, newspapers and newsletters).

### **1.5 Map of the Thesis:**

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The next chapter reviews the debate about the inclusion-moderation theory with respect to political Islam. The third and fourth chapters emphasize respectively the mechanisms that led both Hezbollah and Hamas to moderate their positions with a focus on the impact of geopolitical variables. As for the fifth and final chapter, it summarizes the lessons learnt and contributions of this study. Furthermore, it emphasizes on Hamas and Hezbollah's action with the Arab Spring wave and possibly its aftermath while showcasing that moderation is not always a linear process but that it could also be a reverse one especially with the presence of a geopolitical variable at stake.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Revisiting the Inclusion-Moderation Theory**

#### **2.1- Introduction**

The challenge of including Islamists in the political process was explored by many scholars in the 1980s and 1990s. Debates revolving around whether to include or exclude have moved to explore the essence of Islamist extremism and moderation. This chapter examines the inclusion-moderation theory with respect to political Islamist groups. Revisiting this theory will however remain incomplete if we fail to explore the concept of moderation, in addition to the moderate-radical dichotomy. What does moderation mean in the beginning and can we talk about a radical actor on the way to moderation? Can Islamists moderate or are they trying to embrace certain attitudes that do not really fit their true colors? Do they moderate their politics because they have come to hold new positions on core beliefs and ideological values or do they simply shift their positions, and perhaps for a very short period of time, in order to attain political advantages?

After discussing many definitions of moderate and radical, and unpacking the notion of moderation, in addition to revisiting the scholarly literature with respect to moderation in studies of democratization, the chapter will shed light on Schwedler's "Inclusion-Moderation theory" with respect to political Islam. It will

explore its three different approaches and discuss the scholarship on political Islam that falls within each category. The three different approaches are: the behavioral moderation of groups, ideological moderation of groups and ideological moderation of individuals.

## **2.2 Unpacking Moderation**

According to Schwedler, Islamist is a term that is used for highly diverse political actors who are undoubtedly the most significant non-state political actors in the Middle East (2011). When looking back at the Islamist moderation related literature we find that the distinction between radicals and moderates is essential to all models. The democratic transition literature suggests that political actors supporting an elite-led transition moderate whereas those who put forth demands that are revolutionary in support of the masses tend to be labeled as radicals. Moving away from the democratic transition literature, the terms “moderate” and “radical” designate a stance that is taken either vis-à-vis a political system or practices. Moderates are those who seek gradual change while working within the existing system. Radicals, on the other hand, are those who seek to overthrow a political system while using violence. Consequently, Schwedler suggests that scholars emphasizing objectives argue that Islamists seek fundamental alterations on the socio/political/economical level. However, scholars focusing on tactics suggest that those who seek alteration using purely peaceful measures are moderate in comparison with those using violence. Scholars who embrace the “tactic” argument with respect to the radical-moderate distinction seem to fail when it

comes to defining the objectives of Islamist parties, however. As a matter of fact, when looking at the Muslim Brotherhood we see that it has tried in the past to act peacefully while rejecting violence as a means to political change; we tend to forget however that its objectives range from peaceful to moderate to the use of violent measures vis-à-vis existing political, governmental and economical systems, as the case of Hamas suggests.

Joshua Stacher suggests that while the many branches of the Muslim Brotherhood do not use violent measures to overthrow existing systems, however, they support its armed wing Hamas both financially and rhetorically (2009). In his article *The Brothers and the Wars*, he argues that while the Egyptian Brotherhood is focused on Egypt, it is also concerned with one major issue: the question of Palestine. “During the Gaza war the group and its charity arms attempted to ship medical and food aid to the Palestinians only to be blocked by the Egyptian military”, he adds (2009). Furthermore, what might seem strange enough is how parties such as Hamas and Hezbollah justify the use of violence. Violence becomes not only a tool or measure taken vis-à-vis the enemy but also a stance that is justifiable when it comes to applying their ideologies.

In a study revolving around Muslim rebellion, Mohamed Hafez revisits the moderate-radical definition. He explains why institutional exclusion is a contributing condition for Islamist rebellion. Throughout his study, he elaborates the five propositions that explain patterns of rebellious conduct. In sum, he finds that when the states do not give Islamist opposition movements the opportunity to participate, and employ repression vis-à-vis these movements, they will most

probably rebel. He adds, that “when they do so, Islamists will organize themselves in exclusive, loosely structured organizations that demand strict ideological and behavioral adherence from their members.... Such framing of the conflict is intended to solidify the divisions between outsiders and insiders, as well as to justify and motivate collective violence”. Hafez explores the case of Egypt and Algeria in order to support his argument (Hafez 2003, 200).

In a study of Islamist women’s activism entitled “Who Opened the Window?” Jillian Schwedler and Janine Astrid Clark ask why women’s participation in Jordan’s Islamic Action Front Party and Yemen’s Islah Party has increased dramatically over a very short period of time. Their findings show that political inclusion has produced better results for moderates rather than hardliners. It is over internal party dynamics that those two groups are basically competing. The study of Islamist women however, shows that there is a need for a “methodological apparatus that captures the positions of key party leaders across a range of issues” rather than categorizing the two factions as solely hardliners or moderates. Schwedler and Clark argue that the moderate-radical labels might not apply to Islamists’ stances as they might hold moderate views towards some issues but radical ones towards many others. Internal politics of all parties include complex divides across a spectrum of issues, especially after taking the initial decision to participate. Schwedler and Clark emphasize the fact that political actors may agree with respect to participation in democratic institutions yet disagree on the appropriate role of women. It is in this sense that the existing literature has limitations as it refers mainly to “moderate” Islamist as the persons who accept the



procedural elements of entering the political scene while disregarding their vision of what shape will the Islamic state take- as opposed to “radical Islamists” who reject political participation in all its forms. It is worth mentioning that actors who agree on one issue cannot be assumed to be on accord on others (Schwedler & Clark 2003).

In a report entitled “*Islamists at the Ballot Box: findings from Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, and Turkey*” prepared by the United States Institute of Peace’s grant program, Judy Barsalou, summarizes Carrie Wickham’s views regarding the scholarly literature revolving around the role and impact of Islamists in the Middle East. Wickham concurs with Schwedler and Clark that much of the literature on the Islamist parties is problematic. One of the major problems is that it tends to equate the term “moderation” with “growing support for democracy”. Consequently, Wickham specifies how the existing literature “fails to acknowledge the possibility that Islamist opposition leaders might come to embrace certain aspects of democracy while continuing to reject others”. A second major problem with the current scholarship is that it tends to view all Islamist parties as “monolithic entities supportive of a single interpretation of Islam”. Wickham argues in this respect that Islamists share a wide variety of position with respect to strategic political issues and “end goals” (2011).

In sum, the moderate-radical or hardliner vocabulary remains problematic because it labels particular blocs, rather than focusing on discrete policy positions. Therefore, it might be more interesting to look at moderation as a process varying from radical to moderate rather than a pure category. The process would require

some criteria. These include openness to the wide variety of factions, to political participation in addition to tolerance vis-à-vis the “other”, and the will to change. Of course, some parties show impressive instrumental moderation with respect to certain criteria while keeping radical stances with respect to others. For a better understanding of the radical-moderate dichotomy, it would be preferable to place it within the three models followed by Jillian Schwedler through her revival of the inclusion-moderation theory (2011).

### **2.3- Defining the Inclusion-Moderation Theory**

Moderation theory posits that inclusion in the political process leads extremist groups and parties to abandon violence, integrate and play by the rules of the political game. Schwedler articulates moderation theory as the moderation inclusion hypothesis because the catalyst for moderation of extremist parties is their inclusion in the process. This approach moves away from Samuel Huntington’s and Francis Fukuyama’s notion that Islam is inherently undemocratic. Huntington pushes it far as to insinuate that Islam as a religion is incompatible with democratic institutions, “to the extent that government legitimacy and policy flow from religious doctrine and religious expertise, Islamic concepts of politics differ from and contradict the premises of democratic politics”. Fukuyama concurs with Huntington regarding Islam’s incompatibility with democratic principles. He declares in this regard that “Islam has indeed defeated liberal democracy in many parts of the Islamic world, posing a grave threat to liberal practices even in countries where it has not achieved political power directly” (Fukuyama 1992, 45).

Asef Bayat refutes Huntington, Fukuyama, and others that Islam is undemocratic. He declares that “the question is not whether Islam is or is not compatible with democracy or by extension modernity but rather under what conditions Muslims can make them compatible” (Bayat 2007, 4). Assuming that Islam is not inherently un-democratic, Schwedler emphasizes on three different models determining when moderation has taken place while focusing on the mechanisms that led to it; the first model being the behavioral model or the behavioral moderation of groups.

### **2.3.1 The Behavioral Moderation of Groups**

Schwedler’s first model emphasizes the importance of political opportunities and institutions in creating a major shift in the behavior of groups. As a consequence, previously excluded groups are able to enter the system, while shedding their old radical tactics, and following the rules of the new game. Schwedler focuses on the scholars who have been tackling the importance of behavioral changes in this regard. While some of them have concentrated on the role of constraints on movements, others have established that the constraints placed on parties who wish to participate have changed their behavior. Schwedler retraces the beginnings of the inclusion-moderation theory by shedding light on Samuel Huntington’s “participation moderation trade off” (Huntington 1993, 163).

Huntington’s theory fails to define moderation as it speculates that moderation occurs simultaneously on the behavioral and ideological level. He seems to be among the scholars who combine tactics with objectives. He suggests that inclusion would pave the way for further moderation. By reaching political

openings however, parties would therefore abandon violence and follow peaceful measures “in order to achieve power and put through their policies” (Huntington 1991, 170).

Schwedler admits that much of the literature around the inclusion-moderation theory builds on Huntington, in addition to studies revolving around socialist and Christian groups that formed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The comparison between Islamists, Christians and Socialists proves that moderation correlates much more with struggle to power than religion itself. Like Huntington (1991), Mona el Ghobashy (2005), Samer Shehata and Joshua Stachers (2007) draw on the importance of behavioral change which in turn leads to moderation of ideology.

Ghobashy’s study focuses on the metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. She argues that the Ikhwan’s capitalization on Egypt’s sliver of electoral competition for seats in parliament, the professional unions and municipal councils, has had an especially profound effect on their political thought and organization. Consequently, the institutional rules of authoritarian electoral politics have led to both organizational and ideological change within the group (Ghobashy 2005, 374). Shehata and Stacher also succeed in demonstrating how the shifts to moderation have produced a set of ideas that go hand in hand with democracy and the electoral process, therefore pushing for a behavioral change that would in return generate ideological ones. As per Schwedler, Huntington, Ghobashy, Shehata and Stacher fail to explain this shift as it merits further examination.

Moving away from exploring the shift in moderation of behavior and looking at moderation of ideology, Schwedler examines Omar Ashour’s work *The*

*Deradicalization of Islamists: Transforming Armed Islamists Movements* (2009). His comparative study of Islamist groups in Algeria and Egypt revolves around the main drive leading Islamists to abandon violence. He explores three different case studies. The first case is that of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt between 1951 and 1973. The second and the third cases are those of the Islamic Group, and the related Al Jihad organization. In order to answer his research question Ashour starts his study by defining key terms and concepts of Islamists. By moderate groups, he means groups that ideologically accept, at minimum electoral democracy as well as political and ideological pluralism. By contrast, he defines radical Islamist groups as movements that ideologically reject democracy as well as legitimacy of political and ideological pluralism. He uses the term moderation in order to define a positive attitude change towards democracy and explores the concept of de-radicalization to refer to the process of abandoning violence. In addition to asking “why do radical Islamist militants revise their ideologies, strategies and objectives” he also investigates what caused the initiation of the Muslim Brotherhood De-radicalization process. He emphasizes on the process’ three dimensions: behavioral, organizational and ideological. Furthermore, he focuses on the success of deradicalization in Egypt with the Muslim Brotherhood, Al Jihad and the Muslim Group on the one hand, while concentrating on the failure of the Algerian on the other one, with the exception of the Islamic Salvation Front.

Like other scholars, Ashour focuses on how political opportunities pave the way for further moderation that would eventually lead to a shift in the group’s orientation. Unlike other scholars, however, he succeeds in examining the shift by

presenting four variables at work: state repression, leadership, selective inducement and social interaction (Ashour 2009:14-15). Ashour concludes that “Domestic and international structural constraint forces several armed Islamist movements to initiate the process of change” (12).

### **2.3.2 Ideological Moderation of Groups**

Schwedler questions the effect of strategic behavioral modification’s effect on the ideological orientation of Islamist groups in order to introduce her second model: the ideological moderation of groups. While many studies focus on the mechanistic causal relationship with ideological moderation resulting from behavioral moderation, Schwedler sheds light on other scholars who question the causality of this relationship. She focuses on Janine Astrid Clark’s work on the inner works of the higher committee for the Coordination of the National Opposition Parties in Jordan. It is by analyzing the role of the Islamic Front in the Higher Committee that Clark challenges the inclusion-moderation theory. To start with, Clark examines closely the interaction between the IAF and the HC regarding three political women-related sensitive issues: the amendment of the Honor Crimes Law in Jordan, the personal status law giving women greater rights to divorce, in addition to the quota promoting women’s participation in parliament. By focusing on the IAF’s positions with respect to those issues in addition to its interaction with other HC parties, she realizes that the IAF is not willing to compromise thus raising awareness regarding cross-party cooperation and the IAF’s moderation.

“Cooperation as practiced by the Higher Committee” she argues, “is largely coordination between parties on issues where there are established shared interests... While cooperation between the IAF and other members of the HC extended over a wide array of issues, it did not occur on issues with direct bearing upon shari’a law”, Clark also notes. She argues about the limited role of the Higher Committee with the IAF, especially when it comes to the “red lines” of the IAF and concludes that political cooperation with the Islamic Front revolved around democratic procedures rather than substance. (Clark 2006; 555-556)

Similarly, Carrie Wickham shows how Islamist leaders have moderated their agendas in order to profit from participation in the political scene throughout the process of democratization (Wicham 2004). She concludes, with respect to her studies revolving around Islamist groups in Jordan, Kuwait and Egypt that groups in all three countries have embraced democracy “as a set of procedural rules”. They showed mixed feelings, however, when it came to support the full range of rights incorporated in the western model. As per Barsalou’s report, Wickham argues that participation in electoral politics can lead to changes in core values and beliefs among Islamists particularly when they have the opportunity to engage in sustained cooperation with other secular groups who are also seeking democratic reforms. Showing ideological flexibility on issues around which there is a strong consensus within Islamist parties might however seem difficult especially when old guard leaders show resistance towards changing the group’s mission. Wickham concludes by asserting that moderation does not only occur as result of political participation and elections. The extent to which moderation occurs at the very core level of

Islamic beliefs has to do with four variables: following the party's own agenda or collaborating with other parties who might have different viewpoints regarding important issues; whether cross-party cooperation enhances party leaders' receptivity to new ideas; whether new ideas can be justified in terms of the party's valid terminology; and finally, whether circumstances help the party's auto-reformers to build up on new ideas within their own movement (2011).

Having rejected the fact that strategic cooperation always leads to ideological one, Schwedler explores mechanisms leading to ideological moderation. In *Faith in Moderation* she shows how two Islamists parties, Jordan's IAF and Yemen's Islah Party, have acted differently with respect to political inclusion leading to ideological moderation. She bases her study on three factors that has led inclusion to affect the ideological moderation of parties: changes in public political space; changes in party structures and the creation of a new set of ideas governing political practice. A cultural condition has been added at a later stage: public debate. These conditions varied between the Yemeni Islah party and Jordan's IAF thus leading to ideological moderation of one party but not the other. Schwedler argues that internal party debates may have precisely lead to a shift of ideological redlines on the very long run. She argues that only as a result of these internal debates did Jordan's IAF, see a shift in some of the ideological positions, thus leading to ideological moderation. "These mechanisms are causal but they are interactive rather than unidirectional or path dependent" (Schwedler 2006, 150).

Schwedler explores other mechanisms that help create ideological changes: Ashour's concept of the charismatic leader in reinforcing and legitimizing the de-



radicalization process is one such mechanism. In *Islamist De-radicalization in Algeria: Successes and Failures*, he explores how the Islamic Salvation Army de-radicalized between 1997-2000, whereas the Armed Islamic Group was not able to de-radicalize as successfully (2008). According to Ashour, the AIS had a consolidated, charismatic leadership that was not able to de-radicalize. That leadership was influential enough to disarm the 7000 militants that made up the organization without causing any splits, as well as influencing several hundred militants from other militias and factions. The GIA did not have this type of leadership. Moreover, the AIS was able to interact with other armed groups, FIS, moderate Islamic figures and political parties to support de-radicalization and reconciliation. The GIA had very limited interaction” (2009; 3-4). However, Schwedler argues that a charismatic leader is not sufficient to produce de-radicalization. What is more important is the engagement of those leaders in debates about ideological commitment that would thus produce ideological changes. Moreover, Stacey Yadav focuses on the fact that those debates should be public and not only internal (Yadav 2010). In *Understanding what Islamists want: Public Debate and Contestation in Lebanon and Yemen*, Yadav examines Hizbullah and the Islah party’s efforts at the transformation of debates respectively in Lebanon and Yemen. She devotes a chapter on Hizbullah and Lebanese politics where she discusses the party’s shift from once being a resistant party once to participating in the Lebanese political order in the “post war moment”. Yadav emphasizes Hizbullah’s policy in rendering internal debate a public one: “In addition to expanding public debate by previously rendering a previously

intracommunal dialogue on service-provision intercommunal, Hizbullah also has raised important questions about the scope and mandate of government in a confessional polity” (Yadav, 2010). It goes without saying that Hizbullah’s main ideology “resistance”, became after Al Taef accord part of the “governmental mandate”. This in turn, reflected not only an intracommunal military attitude but also a political one. Resistance, after 2006, turned out from being an intracommunal affair to an intercommunal dispute. What seems to be interesting for Schwedler however, is whether individuals are genuine in their transformations. Thus, she draws the attention on a third model that shows how individuals moderate with time.

### **2.3.3- Ideological Moderation of Individuals**

Much of Schwedler’s arguments draw on Wickham’s work. Wickham redefines the concept of moderation: she views it as a gradual metamorphosis that entails the embrace of democratic and liberal values. Her argument hinges around the importance of political learning with respect to individual Islamists and groups. Despite all the changes that might happen on a group level, Wickham still argues that moderation takes place on an individual level: change in views as compared with previously stated views. In her study about the Egyptian Wasat, she mentions the two variables that have led the party to moderate its ideology: “political learning” and “strategic calculations”. Moreover, she notes that the Wasat party is interesting “precisely because it is a hard case, in which precipitants of moderation are weak and/ or the deterrents of moderation are strong (Wickham 2004).

In addition to Wickham, both Huntington and Nancy Bermeo tackled the importance of the concept of political learning. Huntington argues that not only is political learning drawn from one's own experience but also and more particularly from the experience of others. Bermeo, on the other hand joins Wickham by distinguishing tactical and behavioral changes from cognitive ones: a process through which individuals modify their beliefs as a result of drastic environmental changes, crises and frustrations (1992). Schwedler then tackles the centrality of cooperation in creating ideological changes. While her study concentrates on the fact that cooperation is an effect of shifting ideological commitments, Wickham views cooperation as the main mechanism producing ideological moderation. Wickham however trusts the sincerity of Islamist discourse: for her even if Islamists have moderated for purely instrumental reasons, this suggests that their positions evolved in order to become principles (Wickham 2008).

Ashour also believes in the importance of cooperation on the individual level, thus leading to further political learning. For him social interaction would definitely lead to changes in behavior and ideas of leaderships: "External social interaction aiming to influence Islamist leaders coupled with selective inducements could be key factors in de-radicalizing militants groups" (Ashour, 2008). In certain cases, governments perceive the elimination of a "spiritual" leader as a victory, not knowing that this may eventually make the de-radicalization process less likely to succeed. They fail to acknowledge the necessity of those leaders in legitimizing de-radicalization and initiating internal dialogue among the followers (2008). By following this approach, Ashour fails in advancing examples where moderation

does not occur as a result of further cooperation; and by transitivity, does not mention that radicalism can also be acquired through further intra-groups cooperation.

## **2.4- Conclusion**

This chapter presented a wide variety of definitions of moderation, causality arguments, in addition to different mechanisms of sequencing between inclusion and moderation. It also explored, many variables leading Islamist parties to moderate, such as cooperation, public debate, political learning and leader's charisma, whether on the behavioral or ideological level. While many scholars question the behavioral-ideological causality, I submit it to a test, especially with the new wave of protests that rose up in the Middle East since January 2011. In *Will Islamists become Moderates?* Schwedler presents a wide variety of literature revolving around the inclusion leading to moderation theory and reformulates it by introducing political liberalization as a process that helps in different forms of changes, moderation being one of them. Yet, her theory seems to be incomplete as she fails to introduce an external variable that is the geopolitical one. The coming chapter will examine how two well-known Islamist parties, Lebanon's Hezbollah and the Palestinian Hamas, have shown signs of moderation despite their development in two different contexts, with two ideological starting points, and last but not least with different paths towards moderation. The chapter will most importantly concentrate on the impact of the geopolitical variable on the

modification of behavior and ideologies of Islamist parties such as Hamas and Hezbollah.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **The Influence of Geopolitical Variables on Hamas's Moderation**

#### **3.1- Introduction**

When Muslims looked around them in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they started questioning themselves: What went wrong? They were shocked that they could not acknowledge the fact of succumbing to someone else's rule. From being at the top in a certain period in history, they discovered that they no longer possessed the prosperous, powerful and advanced states that they once had in the Ottoman and Mogul empires. In the absence of a Muslim power, and more particularly a Caliph, who could guide and protect the Muslim society, some individuals felt that they were responsible for their religion and that they had to carry Islam's mission. The Islamic revival was a very normal reaction to the collapse of the "Khilafa", where revival simply meant that religion would eventually rise up again as the central belief of societies. It is true that the Islamic revival has taken a violent or fundamentalist form in some cases, however, one could talk about the Muslim Brotherhood as being a unique case in this regard. This chapter examines how the extension of the Muslim Brotherhood in the occupied territories, Hamas, has been able to show some signs of moderation after being included in the political process. It first tackles Hamas's beginnings, its themes, and its objectives in addition to how it rose in power. It focuses on the methods used by

the party in addition to its instrumental moderation in order to be included in the government. Finally yet importantly, it asserts that geopolitics is the main and constant variable behind Hamas's moderation.

### **3.2- Hamas's Beginnings:**

The Muslim Brotherhood was established to articulate the concept of an Islamic state. It was founded by Hassan al-Bana, a school teacher, along with six other workers in the Suez Canal city of Isma'ilya in March 1928. During its first three years, the Muslim Brotherhood remained a small group; but Al-Banna decided to move his small society to Cairo in order to let it grow further. The Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine is the extension of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. In 1935 Al-Banna sent his brother, Abdel Rahman to establish the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1945, its first branch was inaugurated in Jerusalem and its sources of inspiration were Al-Banna along with Sayyid Qutb and Izz al-Dine al-Qassam. Meanwhile, the organization developed its activities in Egypt; founded new branches and worked on recruiting people. There are no accurate numbers that could permit us to evaluate its popular support back then. However, in a study conducted in 1969, Richard Mitchell asserts that by 1949 the Muslim Brotherhood's two thousands branches gathered between 300, 000 and 600, 000 members (Mitchell 1969). It differed from other organizations though in the sense that it combined both the spread of Islam with the concept of moderation. The organization's main aim was to get rid of the secular and western domination which it claimed was corrupting the Egyptian as well as the Arab Muslim mind; it

argued that true Islam would provide the democratic means to reach such an end. Leiken and Brooke stipulate in this regard that “at its beginning the Brotherhood differed from other reformers by combining a profound Muslim ideology with modern grass-root political activism” (Leiken & Brooke 2007, pp 53-54). Whereas the organization’s main objectives were to create a “Muslim individual”, a “Muslim family”, a “Muslim society” and of course a “Muslim state” which would lead to a “Muslim Khilafa” and therefore to master the world once again under the reign of Islam, its main theme revolved around the following:

“Allah is our objective.  
The messenger is our leader.  
Quran is our law.  
Jihad is our way.  
Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope.”

(Muslim Brotherhood Movement homepage)

The themes and objectives of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Palestinian territories were quite similar to the Egyptian one. The main aim of its leaders was “Islamization first”. Due to the repetitive Israeli invasions of Palestinian territory the organization struggled to keep Islamization as its top priorities however, due to its recruitment strategies a new stratum of activists developed. It opposed the old class Elite in the sense that it wanted to fight Israel along with the process of Islamization. Hamas was formed to solve this dilemma (Robinson 2004, 112-139). It was founded and headed by Sheikh Ahmad Yassine in 1988 at the beginning of the *Intifada*. The group was “an Islamic organization that believes Islam and Jihad provides the means to its ultimate goals: an Islamic state in Palestine” (Carroll 2005, 4). Hamas’s aim and strategies are clearly defined in a charter it issued on the 18



August 1988. The Charter contains its philosophy and its position on central issues such as the Palestinian problem, but also towards social welfare, the role of women, other Islamic movements, the PLO and the Arab countries. Hamas's main theme or slogan appears also in the charter. It does not differ from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's slogan, but adds to it the duty to fight, for the Palestinian problem is a religious problem and each and every individual is called to take part in fighting the enemy.

### **3.3- The Rise of Hamas**

As previously mentioned, the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood was facing internal problems in the middle 1980s between its young strata, who were eager to fight the enemy and its old strata of elite leaders, who were more preoccupied with educating society and establishing an Islamic state. It is important to state however that the old stratum was mainly constituted from an "urban, upper-middle class of merchants", whereas the new generation consisted primarily of "university-educated men" belonging to the lower middle class (Robinson). As a result, Sheikh Ahmed Yasin's plan was to create a separate organization, Hamas, that would bear all the responsibility for participating in the *intifada*. Theoretically, both Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood are separate, yet in practice they are intertwined (Abu Amr, 1993). No one can deny the fact that many supporters were attracted by Hamas's ideology however; none can dismiss the political as well as economic factors which led to its popularity.

The PLO's shift to pragmatism, during the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century enabled Hamas to fill the ideological and doctrinal vacuum. The PLO was no longer the representative of the Palestinians who wanted to regain their lands and take their revenge from the Israeli enemy who killed their families and violated their territories: Hamas replaced it in this respect. Moreover, Hamas profited from a trend toward conservatism spread in the territories with the beginning of the *intifada*. With the increasing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the latter were in need of returning to their roots through Islamic revivalism to fight the enemy which represented western norms and values. The regional effects of the Islamic revolution in Iran, and Israel's support for the Islamists against the PLO in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, were additional causes which led to Hamas's popularity.

Glenn Robinson states that "Israel viewed the secular Palestine Liberation Organization as its main enemy in the occupied lands and followed a divide and conquer strategy of pitting the Islamists against the secularists"(2004, 112). This gave Hamas more room to grow than the PLO. Furthermore, when the Islamic revolution took place in Iran in 1978-1979, people began believing that they could really create a change by joining religious groups determined to fight western domination or states which are allies to the U.S. Finally, it has always been argued that the Oslo Accord is one of the main factors that led to Hamas's growth. At a time when the Palestinian population was trying to liberate their land, the Oslo Accord created rising expectations among Palestinians. It was negotiated by the PLO in 1993 and gave the Palestinians only some territorial control in both Gaza

and the West Bank. The accord, which aimed at granting Palestinians rights as well as a small part of their land and thus create a peaceful atmosphere, backfired and led to Hamas's rise in power at the expense of the PLO.

Although Hamas has been committed to the use of violence however, it justifies itself by declaring that it is only used as responses to the various massacres committed by Israel against the Palestinian people. Even though the use of violence can discredit the many other peaceful and positive facets of a party or an organization, this was not the case with Hamas due to the context in which it grew. The Palestinian society was looking for hope: Hamas was a savior in this regard with its readiness to keep on fighting the enemy in the name of God until liberating every piece of land and granting Palestinians their rights.

Hamas has also profited from the failure of Arab countries to build a fair, open and free economic system. It has used this failure in the sense that it was capable throughout a short period of time to build a strong network of social services. Palestinian society has always been known to be a secular one. Hamas had to offer a new strategy in order to gather public support. It is by stressing social welfare and, more particularly, on providing people with social services that Hamas forged a path that ought to be a successful one. "Cognizant of the lack of public support for its position, Hamas used its welfare services to increase its influence and popularity at the expense of the PLO" (Gruber, 2007, 5).

Nor was Hamas considered a terrorist group by its own people, but rather a legitimate and dedicated group struggling to provide people with many types of social services through "mosque based-institutions, medical and educational

institutions and explicitly political institutions”(Robinson 2004,126). Focusing only on Hamas’s use of violence misses the large dynamics of the movement, which are better understood in terms of Social Movement Theory. At a time when Fatah and the PLO became corrupt, Hamas rose up through its well organized social network. Little wonder that Hamas’s sweeping victory in the 2006 elections was a shock for all parties, including Hamas itself. Hamas’s aim back then was to win a large enough number of seats that would constitute around 40 to 45 % of the total number of parliamentary seats. The outcome of the elections was however “a sweeping victory” for Hamas who won 60 % of the total number of seats (Tamimi 2007).

### **3.4- Uncertain Democracy**

After exploring the election’s result in addition to the path followed by Hamas in the post 2006 elections period it is worth assessing Hamas’s strategies of action regarding the issue of political participation. The following is an attempt to evaluate the inclusion-moderation theory with respect to Hamas. It is by addressing the link between political participation-inclusion and moderation that this thesis attempt to examine this topic. It is important to mention that in the case of Hamas the sequencing or causality of inclusion and moderation are reversed as the ideological and behavioral moderation process began long before Hamas’s victory in the electoral system.

Meshal and Sela suggest that the scope of political participation and power sharing of Islamic movements in the Arab world became a focal point in the

1980's, in the debate on Islam and democracy (2006). The focal point of the debate was whether these movements have undergone a normative change in their attitude towards liberal democracy or rather exploit opportunities under non-Islamic regimes and, most importantly, whether such movements might be willing to accept democracy not only during their struggle to attain power but also after gaining it. A close study of Hamas's strategies reveals a similarity to those of other Islamic movements in the Arab world concerning participation in the political process. Indeed Hamas, like any other Islamic movement, demonstrated at a certain point in time its willingness to shorten the process of Islamization by shifting from an evolutionary to a political strategy in order to gain power. Shai Gruber asserts that "modifying its ideology of Jihad was the only way for Hamas to avoid being perceived as an obstructionist force harming Palestinian society" (Gruber 2007, 6). Therefore, Hamas was able to generate a behavioral change after being known as a radical party. The shift was only instrumental at the very beginning as the party's leaders made use of different interpretations of its charter whenever they felt that they were cornered on a domestic, regional as well as international level. Gruber suggest that Hamas tried to demonstrate that "the Charter was written cleverly and can be interpreted in different ways" (Gruber 2007, 1). Hamas's leaders started using their Charter's interpretation according to their own interests. On one hand, whenever they felt the need to do so they would revert back to their short-term goal or the pragmatic one. Hamas's short-term goal revolves around ensuring its political and military position in Gaza and the West Bank in addition to maintaining its strong domestic support and strengthening its international

positions. On the other one, whenever they felt powerful their long-term goal based on establishing an Islamic state would reemerge.

By concentrating on the period that accompanied the Oslo Accord (1993), we demonstrate how Hamas reverted to its short-term goals while stressing on the notion of *Saber* or patience. Nevertheless, after the failure of the Accord it reverted to its long term goals. The emphasis on violence culminated during the second intifada. Gruber mentions in this respect that “no other Palestinian faction executed as many suicide attacks or generated as many casualties among Israelis as Hamas during the Intifada’s first year” (Gruber 2007, 7). In the events which followed the second *Intifada*, Hamas had to go back and forth with its pragmatism by acting wisely whenever it was confronted on an international as well as regional level. A serious attempt to shift to moderation was perceived prior to the elections though. Jeroen Gunning argues that “Hamas has scaled down expectations regarding its core goals, the creation of an Islamic state, and it has increasingly sought to find a pragmatic way out of its absolutist insistence on the liberation of all Palestine”. Gunning went further to state that Hamas’s inclusion is important to securing democracy in Palestine (Gunning 2004, 252). As it decided to participate in the 2006 elections, Hamas started planning meticulously and in a later stage executing its program: this paved the way to what is known as the “New Hamas”.

The “New Hamas” phase was basically reflected in two particularly significant documents issued by the movement. The first was the “2005 Electoral Platform for Change and Reform”, on which Hamas ran in the elections. The second was the “government platform”, formulated after the elections, in which the

victorious movement suggested a basis for working on a national unity cabinet. In the “Electoral Platform for Change and Reform”, a twenty page document, Hamas tried to portray the changes which have took place within the organization by showing it was able to develop its strategies, perceptions and priorities. According to Khaled Hroub, “Hamas’s electoral platform is closer to Fatah’s outlook than to Hamas’s founding principles” (2006). The diminished level of religious content was shocking for many especially that Hamas had clearly no idea that it was capable of overthrowing the Fatah government in the 2006 elections. Therefore, the party was solely appealing to its pre-existing base: The “electoral platform” promoted a new Hamas. Yet, it is essential to note that drawing conclusions about political parties by emphasizing their election’s program is misleading. Political parties try to show their finest political statements at election times, but this does not mean that it fully reflects their real convictions.

The “Government Platform” was promulgated in March 2006 in order to ensure that the party was ready to implement what it advocated during the pre-elections phase. The second document differed from the first one in the sense that it emphasized Hamas’s willingness to work with other Palestinian parties. It was carefully drafted and targeted different audiences at the same time. On a global level, the movement, now a political party, wanted to show that it was an amicable movement. By doing so it tried to penetrate American as well as European audiences who were shocked and displeased by its success. On a regional scale, Hamas tried to show other Islamist movements and parties that it would still be the Hamas they have always known. It also emphasized the fact that it is a moderate

government in a bid to reassure Arab regimes of its ramification on their internal affairs. On a national scale, Hamas tried to show that it was conducting its ideas towards national unity in order to gain a broader Palestinian audience and reassure its national counterparts. All in all, the “government platform” constituted a real turning point in Hamas’s political thinking as it tried to tackle the conflict with Israel by using a language borrowed from international laws and conventions in addition to focusing on the two-state solution concept. Hroub argues that Hamas used an appealing and “carefully crafted language” in the post-election period in order to show that it is not a “belligerent and war loving movement (Hroub 2010, 152)”.

Hamas undertook a huge step towards moderation. It tried to appeal to a bigger audience by making ideological and behavioral concessions. Not only did Hamas stand against its own *raison d’être* by agreeing to join the PLO, whose driving force is secularism, it also endorsed a two-state solution and agreed to cooperate with previous international treaties and peace conventions. Its efforts, however, were unremarkable due to the international media focus on Hamas rejection of the Quartet’s demands. To be sure, the Hamas of 2006 is different from the Hamas that had been formed twenty years earlier. It is a Hamas that is committed to the political process; a Hamas that was able to redefine itself and its role within Palestinian society. A clear depiction of Hamas’s behavior in the post-2006 elections will allow us to determine whether its inclusion paved the way to its moderation.

### **3.5- Hamas in Power**



While some scholars viewed Hamas's electoral victory as a path towards pragmatism and moderation, others undermined the fairness of the elections and took it as proof that Palestinians could not be trusted and that Israel should use all possible means to ensure its boarders' safety. Levit goes as far as to question how the world would understand and react towards Hamas that was brought up in the 2006 elections. He argues that no distinction should be made between Hamas's armed and political or social wing. He emphasizes that "a review of the evidence regarding the integration of Hamas's political activism, social services and terrorism demonstrates the centrality of the group's overt activities to the organization's ability to recruit, indoctrinate, train, fund, and dispatch suicide bombers to attack civilian targets" (Levit 2006, 3). Levit urges the international community to take the lead; his prayers were directly answered.

Despite Hamas's legal right to rule, its hold on power faced a multitude of challenges, including an international economic blockade and increased Israeli reprisals. The truth is that in the post 2006 elections Hamas tried to implement what it was preaching in its political program. Immediately after its election, it announced a "unilateral truce" and hoped that the Israeli government would reciprocate by negotiating a long-term agreement. The American government responded to Hamas's success by stressing the fact that they would not recognize Hamas's government unless it complies with three conditions: recognizing Israel, renouncing violence and accepting all previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements. However, having been elected on a democratic basis, Hamas's members felt that they should have been given the chance to implement their electoral "platform on

change and reform” without prior conditions. When Hamas demonstrated no signs of complying, the US/EU/Israel started taking actions in order either to oblige it to change its position or to face international and regional isolation. Various tactics were used in order to bring out one of those outcomes.

Many countries were pressured to withhold recognition from Hamas and stop dealing with it (Tamimi 2007). This tactic failed though as the majority of Arab and Islamic states showed their willingness to invite and visit Hamas. In addition to Turkey and Russia, the members of Hamas’s political bureau visited and held talks with the leaders of Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the UAE, Oman, Algeria, Libya, Sudan and Yemen. Nevertheless, the members of Fatah were determined to undermine Hamas’s power. On Monday 13 February 2006, few days before Hamas took control of the legislature, Fatah’s members gathered and decided to grant Mahmud Abbas new powers. Abbas was given the authority to appoint a new Constitutional Court. This constitutional court, which consists of nine judges, was empowered to solve all the disputes between Abbas and the new Hamas elected government. Moreover, the legislators appointed Fatah’s members to four key posts. Hamas described all those actions as being “illegitimate” and the whole procedure as being a “bloodless coup”. It rejected Fatah’s decision at its first session on Monday 6 March, thus pushing Fatah’s members to leave the session and boycott the rest of it. In another bid to weaken Hamas, Abbas tried to pressure Fatah’s members in order not to join the government that Hamas had hoped would be a government of national unity. Not only did Fatah want its members to boycott Hamas’s government, it also laid down two conditions that

Hamas should meet; one of them revolved around Israel's recognition and its right to exist, and the second one being recognition of the PLO's claim to be "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people". Neither condition was accepted by Hamas, which started establishing a government on its own. Therefore, Abbas worked on forming a parallel government whose policies were opposed to that of the newly elected government. Having the full support and financial backing of the international community, he was able to claim exclusive control of the police forces, of various media outlets, and spread his control over the crossing points between Israel and the occupied territories.

The economic sanctions imposed by the International community were the most painful measures taken against Hamas: having inherited from Fatah a huge bureaucracy with at least 160,000 employees, with practically no funds and virtually no means of generating money, Hamas was thus cornered. Employees and their families were being punished in an attempt to rebel against the Hamas government. Peaceful protests soon escalated turning into sabotage acts directed towards the government. It did not take much time for these protests to turn into armed clashes between Hamas and Fatah. Since economic sanctions were not enough to break down the Hamas-led government, violent actions were taken to overthrow it. On the one hand, Fatah tried to weaken Hamas, while on the other hand, and as conflict persisted between the two factions, Israel tried to reinforce the conflict by firing shells into Gaza. Its actions were not limited to the assassination of different Palestinian activists but also to targeting different civilian spots. After shelling a family out on a picnic on a north Gaza beach and wiping out practically

all the family members on 9 June 2006, Israel succeeded in pushing Hamas to retaliate. It is true that Hamas tried to show the whole world that it was committed to its political platform, yet observers were proven right. Undermining Hamas both from within and without made the party hold on to its violent tendencies and Islamic ideals instead of progressing towards moderation.

In the post elections period, Hamas struggled to maintain its pragmatism. However, international pressures as well as national ones challenged the political party and provoked it into calling off its sixteen months truce. Khaled Hroub argues in this respect that the party has long tried to show its ability to shift to moderation as shown per its behavior and acts on the ground. He noted however that “with the ever mounting external pressures on Hamas, in the form of both ceaseless Israeli attacks on the Palestinians to embarrass the government and of United states led western cutting of aid to the Palestinian people and effort to isolate the government, the chances of aborting the natural development of a new Hamas appear great” (Hroub 2006, 27). Some of the commanders of the Ezz el-din el-Qassam Brigades had already been demanding a change of policy believing that Israel’s attacks should not go unanswered. Some of them had by then lost confidence in the viability of a political process. Hamas’s leadership continued to urge its commanders to restrain themselves from military attacks while emphasizing the importance of making the government work despite all obstacles. Yet, the massacre of the Gazan family reminded them of their previous duty in resisting the enemy.

Different Palestinian factions decided to put aside resistance for a while by concentrating on the importance of a dialogue promoting national unity. President

Abbas himself accepted to answer Prime Minister Ismail Hanyá's call for resuming dialogue between Fatah and Hamas. While continuing to deny Israel's right for recognition, Hamas agreed on rectifying several components related to its relation with the PLO as well as in terms of accepting an "Arab initiative" which would work on consolidating relations between both parties. Israel, however, regarded this document as being worthless as if it was planning to widen its spectrum by launching a greater war on Hamas. On 24 June 2006, two members of Hamas were kidnapped. In return, and in less than 24 hours, the Ezz el-Dine el-Qassam Brigades launched a raid against Israel, killing two Israeli soldiers, wounding four and kidnapping Gilad Shallit, a nineteen year-old corporal. Following those actions it was therefore clear that Hamas was drifting far apart from its political "pragmatic" conviction. Israel answered by kidnapping and detaining 64 Hamas officials on 29 June in addition to launching a series of rockets in Gaza's direction for a period of twelve weeks.

Attention focused on Lebanon for a while and more particularly towards Israel's 2006 war on Hezbollah. This did not last long though as Fatah ordered its armed men to take over Gaza by force since it was not able to persuade Hamas's leaders to accept international demands nor to convince Palestinians to turn against the government. Hamas's political wing was afraid that things might get out of control as its military wing was slowly but surely drawn into the battle ground. President Abbas's call for early parliamentary elections pushed Hamas and Fatah's supporters to confrontation. Despite the enormity of US backing for the campaign against Hamas, Fatah was not able to proceed further at that point in time. On 8

February 2007 and after two days of extremely hard negotiations between the two parties, the Mecca Accord was born under the umbrella of Saudi Arabia. On the one hand, it signaled the beginning of the end of Hamas's isolation, while on the other hand it underscored the importance of initiating a dialogue between all Palestinian factions and constituting a national unity government. Hamas and Fatah needed this agreement direly: the former in order to avoid the possibility of a civil war which could have damaged its reputation among people who voted for it, and the latter to enhance both its credibility and authority. The pact did not succeed in channeling the flow of aid and did not last, however. Clashes between the two groups escalated again until gunmen loyal to Hamas took control of Gaza in a short battle. Highly trained, heavily armed Fatah security apparatuses collapsed with extremely astonishing speed. In order to justify its act Hamas stressed the fact that it was not fighting Fatah but rather all those who in the name of Fatah undermined the national unity government. One of the US administration's critics, David Wurmser, once VP Dick Cheney's chief Middle East advisor, believes that Hamas had no intentions to take over Gaza until Fatah forced its hand. "It looks to me that what happened wasn't so much a coup by Hamas but rather an attempted coup by Fatah which was pre-empted before it could happen" (Wurmser 2008).

Hamas's use of violence against its opponents made it an object of fear in Gaza. Beverley Milton-Edwards suggests that "Hamas's version of Islamic governance is not palpable unless as an expression of authoritarian tendencies and the advocacy of draconian Muslim norms and values, something of which many of Gaza's Muslims reject. This undermines many of Hamas's rhetoric about its

democratic credentials and leaves it vulnerable on the long term” (2008). What seemed to be an optimistic beginning for Palestinian politics, turned out to become an uncontrolled situation as the chasm between Hamas and Fatah expanded and eventually led to a divided government.

Hamas was now in sole control of a territory but a very poor one, and the situation in Gaza deteriorated quickly. Israel sealed off its borders and Hamas remained defiant while increasing the number of rocket attacks within Israel. For months, a heavy cycle of Hamas rockets followed by Israeli raids took place. By June 2008, Israel and Hamas were both committed to reach an agreement, and a six months truce began. Hamas was subsisted for stopping rocket attacks on Israel and making sure that other armed groups commit to the same agreement as well. Hamas succeeded largely in halting rocket attacks and it even imprisoned some of those who were firing rockets. After the truce lapsed on December 19, all factions started firing rockets again with almost 60 rockets falling on Israeli border towns on December 24 alone. On the 27 of December 2008 Israel started an aircraft attack on Gaza targeting not only military but also and more particularly Hamas’s infrastructure. This was followed by an open ground war which finally ended on 18 January 2009, when Israel, followed by Hamas announced a unilateral ceasefire.

It is essential to note that since 2007 Hamas has been in total control of the Gaza strip. However, it was only able to do so following a series of bloody clashes. The two years that followed demonstrated that with respect to its relation with Israel, Hamas has also made use of violent methods. In the 2009-2011 period, Hamas and Fatah were able to sign a historic and reconciliatory pact in Cairo, while

vowing a common cause against Israeli occupation. The emerging signs of cooperation did not last long, however. Hamas came out against President Mahmoud Abbas's decision without prior notice, to seek recognition of a Palestinian state from the UN in September 2011.

The inclusion-moderation hypothesis has failed with respect to Hamas. Throughout the 2006-2010 period, and right after its inclusion in the political process, Hamas tried to show signs of moderation. The depiction of events that followed its success in the elections showed that Hamas, although moderate in certain instances, reverted back to its violent means and rigid ideology following certain circumstances.

Mishal and Shela affirm that Hamas's structure suffers from different intrinsic limitations in ensuring a viable base of support for its strategy of political adjustment (2006). For them, if Hamas succeeds in shifting to pragmatism without being criticized for deviating from Islamic dogmas and Palestinian nationalist norms, this would be the result of the political environment rather than Hamas's own institutions. Arguably, therefore political changes taking place on an international, regional and even local level could weaken Hamas's ability to maintain a strategy of "political adjustment and pragmatic thinking" (Mishal and Shela 2006, 152). The next section emphasizes that the inclusion-moderation theory would be more complete when introducing a new variable, which is the geopolitical one. Geopolitics plays an important role in explaining the process of moderation in Hamas's post-election era.



### **3.6- Geopolitics and Hamas's Moderation:**

The 2006 Hamas led-coup d'état, and the 2009 Israeli infiltration into the Gaza Strip shifted the world's attention to the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas. While international media and observers focused on the clashes between Hamas and Israel, Israel found the battle of greater importance and looked at it from a different perspective as it was confronting a third party and outside actor: Iran. It is thus important to understand why Hamas reverted back to violent means after its electoral victory. This section does so by examining the three phases of Hamas's ties with Iran.

The Hamas-Iran relationship followed three particular stages. In the 1980s, the ties were very limited as Iran was preoccupied by the post-Shah period and mainly focused on exporting the revolution and creating Shi'a proxies in the region to grow its transnational power. Gabriel Tabarani states that "due largely to the sectarian differences, Hamas had little to do with Iran. Back then, Hamas also bristled at Iran's support for its rival, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which openly challenged Hamas for popular support in the Palestinian street" (Tabarani 2008, 142).

Hamas's relationship with Iran grew stronger in the 1990's and more particularly in 1992, as a Hamas-led delegation visited Tehran to meet Islamic Republic's supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei and other important Iranian figures. From that moment onwards, the relationship between Iran and Hamas grew stronger as both were joined by their involvement in the geopolitics of the peace process. Elie Rakhess emphasizes that from that point onwards the cooperation and

coordination between Iran and the Palestinian Hamas became tighter and more pronounced (1995). This cooperation was formalized in an agreement signed at the end of 1992 in the city of Qum. Because of this agreement, Hamas was able to open a bureau for its political activities in Tehran. In return, Iran started treating Hamas as its sole representative in Palestinian lands.

The third phase of the Iran-Hamas relation began in 2000. Many events such as the second Palestinian *intifada*, the American invasion of Iraq, Yasser Arafat's death and the 2006 electoral victory changed the dimensions of the relation between Iran and Hamas. Meyrav Wurmser notes that "all those events proved once again to Iran that Hamas can be a powerful tool to help Iran realize its quest for regional domination" (2007). In return, Hamas has also benefited from its ties with Iran especially after winning the 2006 elections and being isolated by the international community. Iran in that sense filled Hamas's need of external strategic support. In December 2006, the Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniya admitted that "Iran constituted strategic depth for the Palestinians" (Haaretz, 10 December 2006, 1).

Iran's aid to Hamas is significant to the point that Hamas could not have succeeded militarily and politically had it not been for Iranian financial and technical support. Reports state that since 1993, Iran has provided Hamas an annual subsidy of approximately USD 30 million in addition to military training (Wurmser 2007). This financial and military aid increased after the 2006 elections. During this visit to Iran immediately after the 2006 elections, Khaled Meshal acknowledged that Hamas would keep on pushing a common agenda, namely "advancing radical

Islam”. In the months that followed, and as per Hamas’s spokesperson, Iran sent aid to Hamas, it was also ready to pay for its deficit. Iran also granted Hamas the amount of USD 250 million in order to compensate for the western boycott. In *the Iran-Hamas alliance*, a study conducted by the Hudson Institute, Wurmser emphasized the fact that Hamas’s security force commander, Jamal Ismail Al-Daoud, further announced that Iran was ready to train Hamas militants in its police training camps. *The Iranian Support for Hamas*, a study conducted by the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center, stresses the fact that Iran provided “weapons, technological know-how, advanced training in Iran, several hundred million USD and political and propaganda support, in the two years which proceeded operation Cast-Lead. Iran tends to invest \$ 250 million more in order to upgrade the organization’s political and armed wings (Petty 2008, 204).

Iran’s support for the Palestinian intifada has been steady. It is rooted in strategic, ideological and political factors explain why Iran organizes the conference. “It is not just ideology or charity that motivates Iran”. The creation of a Palestinian state would contribute to Iranian security (2006). Iranian support for Hamas, in spite of the Shia-Sunni divide is a logical extension of Iran’s geopolitical objectives. Iran’s support to Hamas and Hamas’s willingness to serve Tehran’s geopolitical objectives, suggests that the party’s moderation was only words on paper. The two years that followed operation Cast-Lead, determined how the geopolitical variable might also bring Hamas to moderate. It is true that Hamas had a great deal of ambivalence in terms of partnering with Iran, as Hamas is the

extension of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Palestinian territory, yet, Tehran soon became Hamas's patron as it filled its ideological and financial vacuum.

### **3.7- Conclusion**

This chapter argued that Hamas's moderation has been largely guided by geopolitical variables regardless of its inclusion in the government and its commitment to the political process. The next chapter examines how Lebanon's Hezbollah has shown signs of moderation despite its development in a different context than Hamas, with a different ideological starting point, and last but not least with a different path towards moderation. The chapter will most importantly concentrate on the impact of the geopolitical variable on the modification of Hezbollah's behavior and ideologies.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Geopolitics and Hezbollah's Moderation

### 4.1 Introduction

Hezbollah's emergence into the political scene was part of the bigger explosion of Islamist politics into Middle East. A series of crises including the defeat of Arab states by Israel, socioeconomic imbalances, the end of the Arab nationalism era, and political oppression all contributed to the rise of Islamist politics. The change that took place in Iran during the 1970s is intrinsically linked to the birth of Islamist parties throughout the region, especially in Lebanon where it led to the creation of a new giant on the sociopolitical scene, with a comprehensive program regarding the future of the country. This agenda was not only confined to the borders of the Lebanese state; it also shaped the geopolitical map of the Middle East as a whole.

“The lessons of the Islamic revolution rippled throughout the region, especially in the Gulf states, the West Bank and Gaza, but it had its more direct and profound impact on the circle of young Lebanese Mullas who formed Hezbollah, who identified with the revolution's ideology and embraced the principle of government by the Supreme Jurist (Harik, 2004, 16). Hezbollah's origins, theology and ideology thus stem from the Iranian revolution and their allegiance is directed

towards Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Khomeini and, after his death, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Is Hezbollah a direct extension of the Iranian Islamic revolution in Lebanon? Did it apply the agenda it principally announced when it was born? How did the party move to pragmatism? Did inclusion pave the way to its moderation or did the geopolitical variable play a role in this respect? This chapter focuses on Hezbollah's origins, ideology and its rise to power. It will show how this party has been able to enter the political scene by changing its radical face and transforming itself from being, at a certain point in time, a violent militia to a moderate political party but with a sophisticated military arsenal. It will emphasize the fact that inclusion in the political process is not the only path to moderation. Rather geopolitics may also play an important role in this party's moderation or its reversal.

## **4.2 Hezbollah's Origins:**

Hezbollah, or "the party of God", was founded in 1982. It first gathered young Lebanese revolutionaries, some of them barely in their twenties, who were dedicated to fighting Israel. Among those men, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, an ex-Amal representative in his southern village of Al-Bazuryah, who was only twenty-two years old when he joined Hezbollah. Raghieb Harb, also a young resistant leader in the South, was thirty at the time of the 1982 Israeli invasion. And Sheikh Subhi Tufayli, was only thirty-four at the time. Tufayli became Hezbollah's first Secretary General in 1989. Iran played a leading role in sponsoring the young

guerilla's movement, as it served as a bridgehead for its geopolitical interest and ideology in Lebanon. Syria allowed Iran to create this bridgehead in an attempt to balance against Israel's growing power after the 1982 invasion. Hezbollah's creation was thus part of Iran's campaign to spread the message of the "Islamic revolution" (Norton, 2007).

On 19 February 1985, Hezbollah issued its Open Letter following a series of military and political successes: among them the role it played in the departure of the US Marines from Lebanon. This document is essential in order to understand the image that the party wanted to project regarding its position in Lebanon and the region, as well as its undying loyalty towards the principles of the Islamic revolution in Iran. It will also serve as a basis for comparison with future announcements and political programs that the party would undertake. The "Open letter", commonly known as Hezbollah's program was directed to "All the oppressed in Lebanon and the World". It displayed a strong "made in Teheran coloration" and was designated to mark the one-year anniversary of the assassination of Sheikh Raghیب Harb (Norton 2007, 35). The manifesto was read by spokesman Sheikh Ibrahim Al-Amine in the Al-Ouzai mosque and reflected the views of Hezbollah's founders in addition to the political thinking of its mentor cleric Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah. It discussed the party's identity and its objectives (*The Jerusalem Quarterly 1988*).

"We are often asked: Who we are, the Hizballah, and what is our identity? We are the sons of the Umma, the party of God, the vanguard of which was made victorious by God in Iran. There the vanguard succeeded to lay down the basis of a

Muslim state which plays a central role in the world. We obey the orders of one leader, wise and just, that of our tutor and jurist who fulfills all the necessary conditions Ruhollah Musawi Khomeini: God save him” (Norton, 1985). The document, and most importantly the section dedicated to describing the party’s identity, emphasized that the Iranian revolution constituted a source of inspiration of what can be accomplished for the Umma under the banner of Islam. Moreover, it focused on the importance of the rule of the jurist, or *wilayat al faqih*, in laying down the rules of conduct that should be followed by the party’s members. Consequently, the faqih or jurist is not only an Iranian national leader but also a pan-Islamic leader of the Umma as well. In return, the Umma, Hezbollah included, has to abide by political nationalism while committing itself to intellectual pan-Islamism. In practice however, the *faqih* holds limited political authority, and “his authority is confined to strategic issues such as Jihad, political rule and the classification of friends and enemies” (Saad-Gorayeb 2002, 67). One example of this is the *faqih*’s views with respect to politically driven suicide. Hezbollah was able to include martyrdom as part of its military strategy since it was officially sanctioned and approved by the jurist. In fact, among the very important notions that appear in the “Identity” section of Hezbollah’s open letter is the one revolving around holy war, for every member is a fighting soldier who should accomplish his duties by fighting under the tutelage of the “Commanding Jurist” when needed. “Each of us is a combat soldier when the call of jihad demands it and each of us undertakes his task in the battle in accordance with his lawful assignment within



the framework of action under the guardianship of the leader jurisprudent”(Norton 2007, 38).

Under the title of “Our fight”, the document divides the world into “oppressors” and “oppressed”. Saad-Ghorayeb suggests the fact that it is the attitude to Zionism and the West, America more in particular, that differentiates the oppressors from the politically oppressed. Therefore, the occupation of one’s land by Israel or any foreign power is considered to be a principal determinant of oppression. Consequently, those whose land is occupied will be granted Hezbollah’s full support. Apart from Israel, the US occupies the most hated category of Hezbollah’s enemies. “It is followed by the tyrannical regimes governing the oppressed whose subservience to the West and the US especially, in addition to their inherent injustice as dictatorships translates into oppression” (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 21).

The category of the oppressors includes not only Israel and the US, but it also includes the Phalangists, Amin Gemayel’s (1982-1988) regime and the Lebanese sectarian system. Gemayel was branded a “Butcher”, and his regime, “oppressive” and “hypocritical”. The political system in which it operated is viewed in equally contemptuous terms (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 26), as Hezbollah felt that the “domination of a certain Christian sect that was thought to have lost its majority by the 1970’s, was a problem for many Lebanese and especially for the Shiites who believed that their own community had become the largest group in the country” (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 21). Moreover, the principle of political sectarianism can

never achieve justice in the eyes of the party. It is rather an imbalanced system that promotes corruption because of its unfair division of power.

In the 1985 Open Letter, Hezbollah named its enemies, chose its friends, categorized itself among the oppressed, and paved its way to attaining an Islamic state by using violent means in case it was forced to do so. The remaining sections in its open letter were dedicated to the Christians, to the world scene and finally to the importance that shall be dedicated to Israel's destruction. Hezbollah stresses the fact that it has no evil intentions towards the Christians and invites them to embrace Islam by "opening their hearts to the *da'wa*". It shows the similarities that both the Soviet Union and the US share, as both capitalism and communism fail in laying the foundation for a just society. Last but not least, it stresses its hatred to Israel in addition to the necessity of fighting the later till the end.

A question, which remains unanswered in Hezbollah's Open Letter, revolves around the form of political design the party wishes to follow after liberating Lebanon from both external and internal domination. It is worth mentioning that this letter is a programmatic document as it does not reveal all the components of Hezbollah's ideology. It is a manifesto, as Hamzeh describes it, that evokes a broad appeal rather than an explanation of Hezbollah's ideology and its mode of action (Hamzeh 2004, 27). Therefore, "Whether the goal is clerical rule under the concept of *Wilayat al-Faqih*, the creation of an Islamic republic on the Iranian model, is not made clear in the open letter" (Norton 2007, 39). The next section focuses on the

party's performance and its violent acts in the period varying between the 1982 Israeli invasion and its first encounter with the political scene in 1992.

### **4.3 The Pre-Inclusion Phase**

Analyzing and describing Hezbollah's development since its foundation, one cannot help but notice the presence of two divergent phases in the party's history. The first one can be described as being the violent one as it revolved around resistance and armed struggle. This phase opened with the alleged car bombing of the U.S embassy in Beirut on 18 April 1983, which left 63 dead. The bombing, argues Hariq, occurred at a very opportune time as Beirut CIA operatives were meeting there with members of the same organization from across the region (2004). Another attack occurred on October 1983, leveling the U.S Marine barracks near the Beirut airport. Simultaneously, another car bombing occurred, leaving 58 members of the French contingent dead. The French contingent, like the American, was part of the Multinational Force, brought to Beirut in order to ensure stability after the 1982 Israeli invasion (Norton 2007). After the October suicide bombings, the Marines and the MNF withdrew from Lebanon. The attacks were claimed by the shadowy Islamic Jihad, but the US has always blamed Hezbollah for them. Further investigations led by the American government blamed Iran for the bombings and described the acts as "Acts of War".

Meanwhile, the kidnapping of civilians, which started directly after the 1982 Israeli invasion, continued throughout a ten-year period. The act of kidnapping American and other westerners living in Lebanon aimed at eliminating the presence

of foreigners in addition to disrupting western intelligence networks. Among the kidnapped were David Dodge, the acting president of the American University of Beirut, Terry Wait, a representative of the archbishop of Canterbury, Army Lt colonel William Higgins, whom Hezbollah suspected as being a CIA agent operating with UNIFEL and many others.

Norton argues that Lebanon was a site for proxy wars in the 1980s. Syria, Iran, Iraq, Libya, France, Israel, the Soviet Union and the U.S supplied Lebanese factions with political and military aid. (2007) Syria and Iran agreed to coordinate their attacks against Western interests in Lebanon. Harik contends that “A clear arrangement with Syria that incorporated Jihad against the Israelis by Lebanese Shiites fundamentalists provided the framework for Iran to actualize its strategy in Lebanon” (2004, 39). Over the years, and as Hezbollah grew more powerful, the Syrian regime tried to contain the party. Assad looked at Iran and its protégé with suspicion in 1987, when Hezbollah fighters refused to remove a checkpoint upon the orders of Syrian troops who entered Beirut after clashes with two pro-Syrian militias: Amal and the PSP. The Syrian officer in charge shot the Hezbollah fighters who were at the checkpoint. This underscores the point that the tripartite relationship was not always smooth. In fact relations between Syria, Hezbollah and Tehran exploded in 1985-1988 with the Camp wars and then the struggle between Hezbollah and Amal on the Southern suburbs. The “three-sided relationship” only became closer after the civil war (2004).

#### **4.4 The Transition Phase**

The internal and external dynamics of the civil war helped in the rise and development of Hezbollah and so did the Syrian-Iranian pact. However, how did Hezbollah manage to integrate into the Lebanese political system? Moreover, did this moderate the party's ideological and political stance?

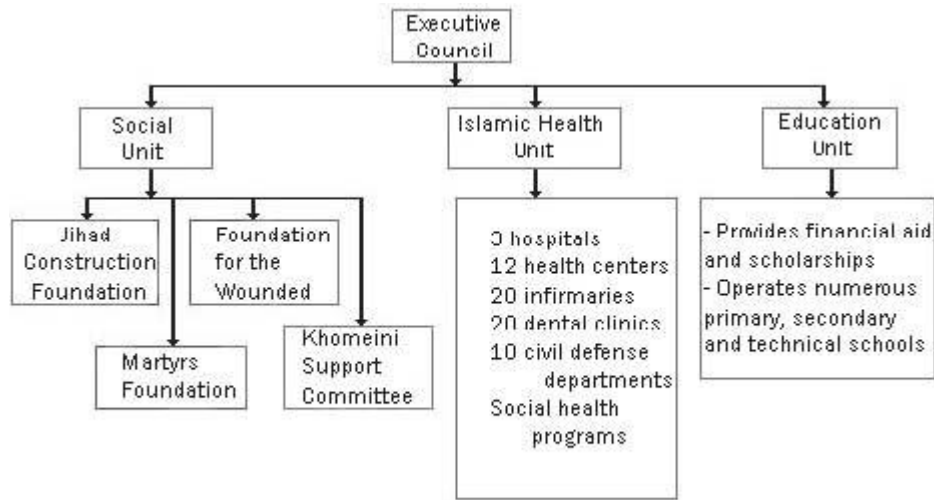
The first phase that marked Hezbollah's integration to the Lebanese system ended in 1989 with the triumph of the pragmatic camp. Its manifestation was felt at the leadership level whereby Abbas el-Mussawi succeeded Subhi el-Tufaili and the party decided to contest the 1992 parliamentary elections (Salloukh and Mikaelian, 14). The end of the Lebanese civil war did not signal the end of Hezbollah as some had suspected. On the contrary, the party rose in influence due to the Syrian political ascendancy in Lebanon. The role that Syria played in Lebanon in the aftermath of the civil war allowed Hezbollah to continue its military activities against Israel under the umbrella of the Lebanese state. Hezbollah became a somewhat legitimate party and its jihadist activities were thus perceived as part of the struggle against the Israeli enemy and were used to serve Syria's geopolitical objectives vis-à-vis the Arab Israeli conflict.

Not only did Hezbollah accommodate itself to Syria's control over Lebanon, it also disregarded the massacre of Hezbollah members by Syrian troops on 24 February 1987. The party "shelved aside its earlier rejection of the Ta'if Accord, and accepted the postwar division of roles imposed by Damascus on the Shi'a community by which Hezbollah was granted monopoly over the armed resistance against Israel" (Salloukh and Mikaelian, 14). Hamzeh contends that Hezbollah showed a great deal of political accommodation in the aftermath of the

Lebanese civil war. One way it integrated itself into the postwar order was by the establishment of a social services network that penetrated all the Shi'a communities in the South, Baalbeck-Hermel region and even the Beirut suburbs (Hamzeh, 2004). Social services increased at the same pace as militant activities in the 1980s and 1990s, with Hezbollah keeping its status as political organization. Social activities revolved around different spheres such as education, reconstruction of houses that were destroyed during previous and multiple Israeli wars and last but not least around the extension of financial aid to the families of the injured and martyred Hezbollah fighters.

As per the table below, Hezbollah's social unit comprises four organizations: the Jihad Construction Foundation, the Foundation for the wounded, the Martyrs Foundation in addition to the Khomeini Support Committee. The Jihad Construction foundation or *Jihad el-Bina* is a very important NGO. It is responsible for infrastructure construction. It became indispensable in the aftermath of the 2006 war against Lebanon as it participated in assessing the damages and paid compensation to the residents of Southern Lebanon and Beirut's Southern Suburbs (Flanigan and Abdelsamad 2009, 2). The Islamic Health and Education Units have an equally important role in meeting the needs of poor Shi'a at the health and educational levels.

**Table 4.1: Hezbollah organizational chart for social services**



Adapted from Hezbollah brochures and interviews with Hezbollah staff (2004)

By establishing this great web of social institutions, Hezbollah was able to portray itself as a social movement that speaks for the disenfranchised. It is in this sense that we can consider this phase as being a transitional phase. By creating these social institutions Hezbollah was able to survive in the aftermath of the Lebanese war against Israel. “One factor that helped Hezbollah to play a stronger political role in society and transform itself from a military actor into a political party was its provisions of healthcare and social services” (Flanigan and Abdelsamad 2009, 2). Effectively, what makes this party a unique one is the scope of services in comparison with other Lebanese parties and fundamentalist organizations (Hariq 2004, 81). The Lebanese civil war left many gaps whether on the administrative or the service level that the state could not fill. Hezbollah and other political parties and fundamentalist organizations filled these gaps.

Interestingly, with the absence of the government in the aftermath of the war, not only did Hezbollah surpass its Shi'a rivals but also other non-governmental organizations that were distributing funds to other organizations or projects. Whereas other parties were preoccupied with providing social services in an attempt to challenge Lebanon's inefficient system, Hezbollah focused on social, educational and medical services in an attempt to serve and control the Shi'a community, but and most importantly in order to gain some legitimacy as a party in the Lebanese political scene. Harik emphasizes the importance of Hezbollah's capacity to fight Israelis and gain its community's public support. "Hezbollah's capacity to fight the Israelis depends on a positive relationship with the state and firm public support, and that sacred mission takes precedence over any other consideration" (Harik 2004, 81). Hezbollah's humanitarian motives in combatting poverty lie in the creation of a "resistant community". In fact, Hezbollah made a religious issue out of poverty and then tied it to political and military struggle. It is worth noting that as per US government estimates Hezbollah, receives around USD 100~200 million on a yearly basis under the form of *Bunyads*: funds used by the clergy in an attempt to finance Iran's charitable and political agenda abroad (Harik 2004, 82). Those funds play an important role in Hezbollah's ability to secure the support of large sectors of the Shi'a community. Those funds play an instrumental role in Hezbollah's ability to secure the support of large sector of the Shi'a community.

#### **4.5 The Inclusion Phase**



Hezbollah's political integration started slowly but surely when it contested the first postwar elections in 1992. Participation in the elections created a clear dilemma for Hezbollah. The party was torn between participating in a government that it previously labeled corrupt, and seizing the opportunity and competing in the elections (Norton 2007, 99) to demonstrate its Lebanese credentials.

Hezbollah's leaders had originally rejected the idea of participating in the political process in the 1980s. Sayyed Muhammad Husain Fadlallah, one of the most important and influential Shi'a clerics in Lebanon, espoused a somehow moderate approach vis-à-vis Hezbollah's participation. He looked at political participation as a means of achieving gradual reforms in society, since establishing Islamic rule was somehow unachievable due to Lebanon's confessional society. He "emphasized the need to come to a modus vivendi with the state rather than remain outside the political system and judge it as abhorrent in strictly Islamic terms" (Norton 2009, 99). Many other clerics made similar points: Sheikh Mohammad Mehdi Shams Al-din, the leader of the Supreme Islamic Shi'a council from 1978-2001, stressed the importance of Islamic moderation and integration into the Lebanese political scene. Mallat emphasizes the importance of a pluralist representative state in which "confessional democracy would be based on the principle of consultation" (Mallat, 1988). This being said, it is interesting to look back at the internal debate that took place prior to the 1992 elections.

Hassan Nasrallah, Naim Qassem, Subhi Tufaily and nine other Hezbollah leaders debated the dilemma of participating in the political system: they tackled the legitimacy of Hezbollah's participation in a non-Islamic government, its

ideology and its ties to practical interests, and cooperation with a secular government and thus the abandonment of Hezbollah's main principles revolving around the Islamic Sharia (Norton 2009, 100). The majority of the leaders thought that it would be in the party's best interest to make a compromise and thus run in the elections that would take place in the summer of 1992. Only Tufayli opposed this view. He argued that by running in the elections, Hezbollah would be undergoing a deep transformation whereby the party would become a mere political participant instead of being a resistance party and a revolutionary force. Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei, who succeeded Ruhollah Khomeini after his death, gave his blessing with respect to Hezbollah's participation in the elections. Iran supported Hezbollah's decision to participate in the political realm and so did the Shi'a community which looked at political participation as a way for future political empowerment.

Hezbollah's decision to contest the 1992 elections created a rift in the party with Tufayli leading the camp of those who opposed the decision. It also signaled the victory of pragmatism over ideology. In the end, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah announced Hizbollah's participation in the 1992 summer elections (Norton 2009, 101). The differences in terminology and ideas between the 1985 Open Letter and the 1992 parliamentary election program were substantial.

Hezbollah launched its political program on 2 July 1992. The program was addressed to all Lebanese and not only to the party's adherents. Hezbollah all but abandoned the call for an Islamic participation that would in return ensure reforms within Lebanese society. The program revolved around the development of the

following pillars: liberating Lebanon from “Zionist” occupation, putting an end to political sectarianism, pursuing social, educational and administrative reforms, and last but not least ensuring political and media freedoms. Addressing the whole Lebanese population and embracing an anti-sectarian stance underscored Hezbollah’s dramatic shift with respect to its views appearing in the 1985 Open Letter, where the party had stated that the Lebanese system is unjust and thus should be “radically” changed. To sum up then, the decision to integrate into the Lebanese political system gave Hezbollah a sense of belonging to Lebanese society; but also the ability to survive in the aftermath of Israel’s withdrawal from South Lebanon. It was also proof that Hezbollah can and is willing to compromise by adopting more moderate political stances.

#### **4.5.1 Hezbollah and the Political System**

In the 1992 elections, Hezbollah and its non-Shi’a political allies were able to secure twelve seats in the 128 members of parliament; eight of these seats went to Hezbollah members, four to non-Shi’a Hezbollah supporters. In the 1996 elections, Hezbollah went on to win ten seats out of 128, 7 of them being for the party itself while the remaining 3 went to its allies. In the summer of 1998 the first postwar municipal elections were held. Hezbollah participated and won most of the seats in South Lebanon, secured an important portion in the Beqaa, and practically won all the seats in the Shi’a districts of Southern suburbs of Beirut (Saad-Ghorayeb 46). This signaled Hezbollah’s evolution from an “Iran influenced conspiratorial terrorist group” rejecting participation in Lebanese politics, to a party with

considerable autonomy and a talent for playing politics and winning elections (Norton, 6).

Not only did Hezbollah's success in the 1992 elections shift the way Hezbollah positioned itself within Lebanese territories, it also showed the extent to which the party had become indispensable to the Shi'a community. Ghorayeb suggests that Hezbollah's political "*Infitah*" or openness was a function of the power shift in the Iranian leadership, namely the victory of the moderate faction led by Hashemi Rafsanjani over the group led by Hujjat el-Islam Ali Akbar Muhtashemi. Following the 1992 parliamentary elections, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah was elected as Hezbollah's secretary-general and Sheikh Naim Qassem as deputy secretary-general. This did not end the party's resistance to Israel after its integration into the Lebanese political system. However, did this shift in Hezbollah's path in the post-1992 parliamentary election era pave the way to its moderation?

The postwar Lebanese government did not only oppose Hezbollah's "Open Letter", but also its military operations in South Lebanon. Not only did the Lebanese government compete with the party's popularity as the only resistant force in Lebanon, it also could not contain its actions. Hezbollah used to plan and execute its operations without coordinating with the Lebanese government. The lack of communications between Hezbollah and the Lebanese government created a schism between the government and the party. The party would initiate an attack without giving prior notice to the government or consulting it on field operations matters, leaving the authorities to deal with the consequent destruction, casualties

and population displacement resulting from Israel's retaliation. The Lebanese government sought to deter Israel by diplomacy, in an attempt to limit Hezbollah's control in South Lebanon. The aim behind using diplomacy was twofold. On the one hand, the Lebanese government would end the Israeli occupation in South Lebanon while on the other hand it will be acting against Hezbollah's very raison d'être by ending its activities against Israel and limiting its presence at the borders. Harik goes as far as to note that apart from the fear that the Lebanese government had vis-à-vis the response that could emerge from Hezbollah's military acts towards Israel, the party was also using military acts against the enemy for its own "aggrandizement". The party's military wing, along the Iranian-Syrian operational aids, mainly military, logistics, intelligence and financial supports, helped Hezbollah transition from being a local resistant party to a regional power that influenced directly the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as peace negotiations. "The arrangements between Hezbollah and Iran to oppose Israeli occupation in southern Lebanon were facilitated by the Assad regime, because they furthered its strategy of indirect confrontation with the Israelis with no loss of Syrian influence in Lebanon" (Harik, 2005).

#### **4.5.2 The Era of the Political Programs:**

Despite the schism that was growing between Hezbollah and the government, the party's reservoir of public support grew at an increasing rate throughout the 1990s. This support legitimized Hezbollah's resistance and military acts against Israel and helped the party by extending further popular support during the 1992,

1996 and 2000 parliamentary elections. The 1996 electoral program did not differ much from the previous one. It focused on human and economic rights in addition to achieving social justice and unity of the country. Moreover, and in an attempt to win new seats, the party's electoral program focused on the cease-fire agreements that were signed in the aftermath of the massacre of Lebanese civilians in Qana. Similar themes were tackled in 2000 but a section was added with respect to Hezbollah's efforts to guarantee Lebanon's sovereignty and the fact that Hezbollah's fighters gave their blood to their country. The Political Program of 2005, focused on three main issues: "the adoption of Islam as a way of life, the struggle against corruption and the end of occupation in Palestine" (Van Engeland and Rudolph, 40). In an interview with the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* on 20 February 2000, Nasrallah labeled the phase varying between 1992 and 2005 as an evolutionary phase in the history of Hezbollah whereby the party became a national movement with mainstream political aspiration (Noe, 214). Similarly, Alagha labels this era as "the era of the political programme", whereby "Hezbollah integrated more and more into the public sphere even attempting to control it after the Second Lebanon War" (Alagha, 2007).

Since the 1990's, Hezbollah has evolved as a mainstream political party, extending great social services to Lebanese in general and Shi'a in particular, and participating in municipality and parliamentary elections. The party discovered that its political program helped in enhancing its legitimacy and widened its public support. Furthermore, the party tried to Lebanonize itself by emphasizing the fact that its acts were directed towards Israel in an attempt to deter Israeli attacks and

protect Lebanon's infrastructure and citizens. In the above-mentioned *Al-Ahram* interview, which took place after the destruction of three power plants in Lebanon resulting from the killing of 7 Israeli soldiers in January 2000, Nasrallah declared that the party will practice self-restraint, demonstrating the party's political evolution:

Our second objective is to protect Lebanon's infrastructure and population. Based on that, we believe that it is in Lebanon's national interest, and the interest of the resistance, that we restrain ourselves while reserving the right to respond when we see fit. We believe that Israel's main intention was to provoke Hezbollah into responding violently, and that our self-restraint destabilized their entire plan.

Nasrallah's logic reaffirms that Hezbollah made a major change with respect to the nature of its Political Programme (*Al-Ahram, 2009*).

The party's programs reveals a double discourse in the evolution of Hezbollah: "the clean and neat political discourse relying on a liberal political Islam makes a clear cut between politics and ideology. However, "Hezbollah still speaks in coded language when addressing its militants" (Van Engeland and Rudolph 2013, 40). This highlights the fact that Hezbollah's moderation is only instrumental. An example given by Van Engeland and Rudolph is this respect revolves around the establishment of the Islamic republic in Lebanon. Whereas the debate around the establishment of an Islamic republic remains present within the party, Hezbollah pretends that it has given up on it and that it is no longer part of its agenda in Lebanon.

Yet, the period after the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon posed serious challenges to Hezbollah's moderation. Further analysis of the party's activities in the post-

Israeli withdrawal period shows how geopolitical variables pose an obstacle in the path of Hezbollah's enduring moderation.

#### **4.6 Geopolitics and the Path towards Moderation:**

When Israel withdrew from Lebanon on 24 May 2000, ending eighteen years of occupation, Hezbollah's *raison d'être* was challenged. Its presence was theoretically no longer viable. The party however "argued that the total liberation of Lebanon had not been achieved due to the continued presence of Israeli forces in the Shebaa Farms" (Salloukh and Mikaelian, 20). The Shebaa Farms are a small piece of land that both Syria and Hezbollah consider as part of Lebanon, while Israel considers it as being part of the occupied Golan Heights. The justifications by both Syria and Hezbollah failed to convince many Lebanese who thought that the party's arms were deployed at the service of Syria's interest in the region in general and in Lebanon particularly (Salloukh, 2005). However, Lebanon was then under Syrian control and Hezbollah's logic mirrored that of Syria's. Salloukh and Mikaelian emphasize the importance of Syria's geopolitical calculations on Hezbollah's logic. In the aftermath of Hafez al-Assad's death and the rise to power of Bashar al-Assad the Syrian Hezbollah relation changed. It became a relationship whereby Syria no longer exerted automatic power over Hezbollah (Salloukh and Mikaelian, 2013). Bashar enhanced Hezbollah's political status and power not only by receiving Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in Damascus but also by sending advanced weaponry to the party.



In the *Al-Ahram* interview of February 2000, Nasrallah clearly defined the nature of the party's relationship with Syria: "At a time when the rest of our Arab brothers are busy pursuing their own interests, our friendship, brotherly relations, mutual trust, cooperation, and exchange of views with Syria are as strong as ever. But in the pursuit of the national and popular interests, Hezbollah makes its decisions alone and as it sees fit, and Israel's portrayal of Hezbollah as a Syrian tool is completely wrong". Albeit insisting that Syria is a sister country, Nasrallah went with great strengths to emphasize that the party takes Lebanon's national interest into account when making any decision (Al Ahram, 2000).

After defining the new relationship between Hezbollah and Syria, it is worth shedding light on the enhancement of this relationship at the aftermath of Hariri's death, the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon and the 2007 fighting. Syria's alleged role in all those events shows that it is a strong geopolitical force with the ability to influence Hezbollah's moderation.

#### **4.6.1 The Dynamic Duo: Syria and Hezbollah**

Following Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah started facing national, regional and international challenges. On the national level, the party was trying to remind the public at many instances of the importance of its weapons as a real deterrence against Israel, and hence its inability to demobilize. For long, it kept reminding Lebanese about Israel's constant violation of the national airspace. On the regional level Hezbollah brought up its duty to free the Shebaa Farms: a responsibility it owed to Lebanon and to the Arab Israeli conflict. "As long as there will be an inch of Lebanese soil occupied the resistance will have

the right to continue the struggle combat of which nobody in Lebanon disputes the legitimacy”, claimed Nasrallah (Noe 280-281). On the international level, however, a new status quo was created in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States. Hezbollah’s militants saw in this attack a call for the reemergence of terrorism whereas the leaders tried to maintain its political face. In both cases it is essential to note that the 9/11 terrorists attacks re-initiated the debate within Hezbollah regarding the party’s role and nature.

The challenges that faced Hezbollah, whether on the national, regional or international levels threatened its relationship with Syria. Nasrallah emphasized the importance of Syria and Iran’s support of Hezbollah’s activities that were serving Lebanon’s national interest. He often underscored the theme that an assault against Lebanon would indirectly involve Iran and Syria in Hezbollah’s favor, an act deemed alienating by those Lebanese who did not like the tripartite relation between Hezbollah, Syria and Iran. Salloukh and Mikaelian assert that Hezbollah’s relationship with Syria faced its first test in 2004, when the UN Security Council issued resolution 1559 censuring Syrian intervention in Lebanese affairs and calling on the Lebanese government to disband and disarm all Lebanese militias, including the Hezbollah. Salloukh and Mikaelian note that in parallel to its relation with Syria, Hezbollah fortified its relationship with Iran too, thus embedding itself in the US-Iranian confrontation in the region. Meanwhile, Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri’s assassination in February 2005 tipped the balance of power between Hezbollah and Syria. International pressure against Syria was mounting in the aftermath of Hariri’s assassination in an attempt to force it to withdraw from

Lebanon. On 26 April 2005, Syrian troops officially withdrew from Lebanon. By pressuring Syria to withdraw from Lebanon, the US thought that it would be decreasing the leverage that Syria had over Hezbollah. However, not only did Damascus use Lebanese political institutions in order to support and give political cover to Hezbollah, but also directed a part of the Lebanese state's security apparatus to support logistically the arming of Hezbollah (Rabil, 2007).

By arming Hezbollah and targeting the politicians that supported the Cedar Revolution, Syria hoped to prove that it is the only force capable of standing against chaos in Lebanon. The continuous pressure on both Syria and Hezbollah at the aftermath of Hariri's death metamorphosed Syria's relationship with its counterpart into a strategic one. In June 2006, and just prior to Israel's war on Lebanon, both Iran and Syria signed a defense treaty whereby Iran committed itself to defend Syria in case of a US or Israeli attack. Rabil stresses on the importance of this treaty in reinforcing the relationship between Syria and Iran. Hezbollah remains a tool in the hands of both powers, he adds (Rabil, 2007). It is essential thus to focus on the Hezbollah-Syria-Iran axis for a better understanding of Hezbollah's performance in the months that followed the signature of the defense treaty.

#### **4.6.2 Hezbollah A proxy for Iran?**

Whereas Syria regards Iran as a strategic partner that could help in its fight for survival, Iran used Syria in order to spread its hegemony in the Middle East. Moreover, both regard Hezbollah as their proxy in the region. Most probably both

Syria and Iran knew about the cross-border operation that their protégé Hezbollah conducted in July 2006, thus provoking a war between Israel and Lebanon. There is also a very high possibility that Hezbollah triggered this incident to underscore the importance of its weapon arsenal. A huge debate was created around the results of this war. Hezbollah and its partisans asserted that they came out of the 2006 war victorious, while the supporters of the March 14 coalition claimed otherwise. In all cases, it is essential to note that Hezbollah was able to prove once more that its armed presence was nonnegotiable. Moreover, it truly acted as a regional power thus becoming the first “Arab army to attack Haifa since 1948” (Rabil 2007, pp 43-51). At the aftermath of the 2006 war, some Lebanese political elites and parties along with both and Iran embraced Hezbollah’s victory. In fact, some would argue that Iran was totally aware of Hezbollah’s activities and went as far as to push the party into this war thus sacrificing Lebanon for the its own benefits in the region. There was also some accusations that Iran dragged Hezbollah into this war in an attempt to divert the international community from its nuclear program. The US State Department coordinator for counter-terrorism asserted that Iranian participants were directly involved in the combat. He went as far as to label Iran as being the “paymaster” who spent “hundreds of millions of dollars” whether on arms or other form of support in order to back Hezbollah. He went as far as to say that Iran pushed Hezbollah to start the war (William Samii 2008, p 50).

Hezbollah’s acts in the aftermath of the 2006 war on Lebanon demonstrate that the party serves as a proxy for Iran, its geopolitical protégé. Not only did Iran fully support Hezbollah’s war, and provide the party’s combatants with weapons

and arms, it went as far as to push Hezbollah's ministers to resign from the cabinet. By so doing, Hezbollah's ministers thought they could change the power formula in the country and secure a bigger share in the political system. They also assumed that the government would collapse without their participation. However, unlike the party's predictions the government did not collapse as a result of strong support from Saudi Arabia. The government also proceeded with the International tribunal. Following Hezbollah's resignation from the government, the party used political violence in an attempt to push the government to render to its demands. After a sit-in that lasted more than 18 months in Down Town Beirut, Hezbollah was able to take over the capital in six days. This pushed the government to offer great concessions in the party's favor. Kohler emphasizes the importance of diplomacy, and most importantly Qatar's mediation, in helping Hezbollah's minority coalition gain veto power in the Lebanese parliament thus ensuring the party's ability "to veto any future bills concerning the disarmament of Hezbollah, which further increased the group's power in the government" (Cohler, 2011).

## **4.7 Conclusion**

The aftermath of the 2006 war against Israel and the 2008 actions fueled sectarianism in Lebanon. Hezbollah's war went from fighting the enemy Israel, to fighting a national counterpart. Even though the party was included in the political process it did not renounce the utility of its weapon arsenal. It did somehow embrace moderation by running for elections and entered the political arena.

However it was not and will never be a weapons free moderate political party, for its ties with Iran and Syria will always be an impediment in the path of total moderation and hence demobilization. The next chapter contrasts both Hamas and Hezbollah's path to moderation. A clear depiction of both parties shows that perhaps the Arab Spring's emergence was not particularly in their favor thus showing once again that these two parties are deemed incapable of achieving complete moderation.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Hamas, Hezbollah and the Arab Spring

### 5.1- Recapping the Argument

The challenge of including Islamists in the political process was explored by many scholars since the 1980s until the present time. Debates revolving around whether to include or exclude them have moved to explore the essence of Islamist extremism and moderation. The first chapter of the thesis examined the inclusion-moderation theory with respect to political Islamist groups. In order to fully explore the theory, it was essential to explore the concept of moderation, in addition to the moderate-radical dichotomy. What does moderation mean? Can we talk about a radical actor on the way to moderation? Can Islamists moderate or are they trying to embrace certain attitudes that do not really fit their true colors? Do they moderate their politics because they have come to embrace new positions on core beliefs and ideological values or do they simply shift their positions, and perhaps for a very short period of time, in order to attain political advantages? This thesis tested these questions against the core of Hamas and Hezbollah.

After discussing many definitions of moderate and radical, and unpacking the notion of moderation, the first chapter revisited the scholarly literature with respect to moderation in studies of democratization. The second chapter of this thesis examined Schwedler's "Inclusion-Moderation theory" with respect to political

Islam. It explored its three different approaches and discussed the scholarship on political Islam that falls within each category. The three different approaches are: the behavioral moderation of groups, ideological moderation of groups and ideological moderation of individuals. It is true that the Islamic revival has taken a violent or fundamentalist form in some cases, however, one could talk about the Muslim Brotherhood as being a unique case in this regard. The third chapter examined how the Muslim Brotherhood's affiliate in the occupied territories, Hamas, was able to show some signs of moderation after being included in the political process. It first tackled Hamas's beginnings, its themes, and its objectives in addition to how it rose to power. It focused on the methods used by the party in addition to its instrumental moderation to justify its inclusion in the government. Last but not least it asserted that geopolitics is the main and constant variable behind Hamas's moderation.

“The lessons of the Islamic revolution rippled throughout the region, especially in the Gulf states, the West Bank and Gaza, but it had its more direct and profound impact on the circle of young Lebanese Mullas who formed Hezbollah, who identified with the revolution's ideology and embraced the principle of government by the Supreme Jurist (Harik, 2004, 16). The fourth chapter of the thesis tackled Hezbollah's origins, theology and ideology. It is worth emphasizing the fact that Hezbollah's ideology and theology stems from the Iranian revolution and that their allegiance is directed towards Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Khomeini and, after his death, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. After highlighting Hezbollah's rise to power, the chapter showed how this party was able to enter the



political scene by changing its radical face and transforming itself from being, at one point in time, a violent militia to a moderate political party but with a colossal military arsenal. It also emphasized the fact that Hezbollah's inclusion in the political process is not the only path to moderation. The balance of this chapter addresses the current and possible consequences of the Arab popular uprising on both Hamas and Hezbollah.

Undoubtedly, geopolitics is an essential variable in the decision to moderate. For both Hezbollah and Hamas. Both Gaza and Lebanon border the two central Arab spring hubs, Egypt and Syria, noting that both parties had double standard stances vis-a-vis the deep political and structural changes that took place in 2011 and up to this day. Hezbollah's direct military intervention in Syria to support the Assad regime against both its domestic and external opponents hindered any possibility for a potential moderation not only on the national level, but also on the regional one. Early in 2011, Hezbollah strongly supported the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and the Al-Khalifa regime in Bahrain. It also went as far as to depict the Arab uprisings as the fruit of the Iranian revolution over the period of thirty years. In his speech on 25 January 2012, Ayatollah Khamenei described events in Egypt as an "Islamic awakening" inspired by Iran's own 1979 revolution (Kahl, 2012). Although, Hezbollah stood by the Arab uprising with the fall of the Egyptian regime in February 2011 linking the uprising to its own resistance ethos, it later performed a 180 degrees turn on its previous endorsement of the uprisings by shifting from a party that once supported the oppressed popular movements, to one supporting the regime of Bashar al-Assad. Benedetta Berti goes

as far as to mention that since then, Hezbollah stood with the Syrian regime while discrediting the protesters and arguing that the anti-Assad movements is backed up by the West. Moreover, Hezbollah continued to stand by the Assad regime even when the anti-regime demonstrations culminated and reached a full fledged war (Berti 2012, 23).

Much like Hezbollah, Hamas, was directly affected by the Arab Spring. In fact, Berti (2012) affirms that Hamas has been undergoing a number of important changes in order to adapt to the shifting regional environment. Just like Hezbollah, it openly supported the nascent protest movement starting with Tunisia in 2011 followed by Egypt and Libya. The retreat of Hamas from the Egyptian political scene after the overthrow of Morsi, is becoming reactive and no longer proactive. Thus, Hamas is currently adapting to some extent to the geopolitical changes and development instead of initiating them. The new status-quo in the region in general and in Egypt and Syria in particular, forced Hamas and Hezbollah to drastically change their religious coalition to a more practical “survival of the fittest” one. This in fact, led to a structural, political and religious division into the so-called “Axis of resistance”. Paul Salem attributes this division to the fact that people wanted good government and social justice and were no longer infatuated with Iran or the “axis of resistance” (Salem 2013). “As the Muslim Brotherhood rose in Egypt, Hezbollah’s erstwhile ally, Hamas, drifted away from it and its Syrian and Iranian backers, and found a new footing in Egypt and the Gulf”, he adds. Furthermore, the departure of Hamas’s officials’ from Damascus, and more particularly its move to

Qatar in 2012, signifies its exit from a historical non-religious coalition, to a purely Sunni religious one.

Hamas's situation seems to be a difficult one at the aftermath of the Arab Spring. It is suffering from new internal divisions. In February 2012, Gaza leader Mahmoud Al-Zahar criticized an agreement by political chief Khaled Meshal, who resides in Syria, to end a five-year rift with the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah's party (Mitnick 2012). "It is very noticeable that the Hamas leadership in Gaza is drifting away from the Hamas exiled leadership. Meshal has been weakened. He is trying to show some moderation because of the changes in the Middle East but the Hamas leaders in the Gaza strip are on their own territory and not as affected", suggests Mkhaimar Abusada.

While Hamas maintains strong ties with Iran, the popular uprising in Syria suggests that there are limits to its willingness to play a client role for Iran. As a result, Hamas has abandoned its resistance role, and allying with the pro-American camp composed of Turkey, Egypt, and Qatar. Jonathan Schanzer, suggests that the movement has dispatched senior figures to deal with these three forces in an attempt to realign with the new regional Sunni order. Over time, he adds, this triumvirate was able to fill the void left by Iran (Algemeiner 2013). The rift between Hamas and Iran should be used in a positive way though in order to push for a Hamas-Fatah government that would eventually recognize Israel and advance Peace process. The geopolitical variable can play an important role in this respect. Eliot Abrahams suggests that Turkey's emergence as sponsor for Hamas reflects the anticipated demise of the Assad regime in Damascus, and the problems this

causes for Hamas. Guseynov suggests that Turkey could become the new sponsor and protector of Hamas, with the failure of Assad's regime and the weakening of Iran's role in Syria (Guseynov 2012). He goes as far as to declare that Hamas could greatly moderate ideologically, in return for upgrading its ties with Turkey, joining the peace process opponents, and backing the Hamas-Fatah unity government. Recent talks suggest that Turkey might extend financial aid to Hamas in order to fill the gap created by Iran's exit thus absorbing Hamas furthermore into its orbit. One of the essential consequences of the Arab Spring on the "Axis of resistance" is the isolation of Iran, Syria and somehow Hezbollah from the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. It is without doubt that this event resulted in Hamas's geopolitical deterioration on the regional and domestic levels, especially after losing its traditional allies on the one hand and Egypt on the other, specifically after Morsi's isolation on 30 June 2013.

## **5.2- Hezbollah, Hamas and the Arab Spring:**

The Arab Spring has had great impact on Hamas and Hezbollah's path to moderation. Salloukh suggests that "Hezbollah's military intervention in Syria, most notably in Qusayr in April 2013, damaged the party's domestic legitimacy and reopened the debate over its weapons" (Salloukh 2014). This is a clear reflection of how any attempt for moderation, whether on the domestic or the regional level, failed after Hezbollah intervened militarily in Syria. Hezbollah's path to moderation is with no doubt a non-linear one. The fact that Hezbollah is not fighting Israel anymore, but rather anti-Assad militants, reveals an anti-moderation

perspective. In fact, this signaled the enhancement of Hezbollah's anti-moderation policies specifically after the civil unrest that took place on 7 May 2008.

The case of Hamas is somehow different from Hezbollah's. The drift between Hamas's leadership and the decentralization of the political, ideological and religious bureau along the geographical isolation from both Egypt and Israel reinforced Hamas's anti-moderation stance. Unlike Hezbollah, the geopolitical variable here is creating two different scenarios. First, and in the face of the current status quo, based on the Muslim Brotherhood's discriminative policies in Egypt, Hamas will remain in self-isolation hoping for a second scenario. Hamas's network of subterranean tunnels between Egypt and Gaza, especially created to smuggle fuel and carry operations in Egypt if needed be, toppled with violence in the Sinai peninsula all contributed in the deterioration of the Hamas Egyptian ties. Hamas's rocky relationship with Egypt, especially after the overthrow of Morsi, clearly depict that the movement cannot but opt for a national reconciliatory stance (Schanzer 2013). Second, and in case of national reconciliation, supported by regional moderate powers such as Egypt, Turkey and Qatar, Hamas would rather be integrated into a broader national Palestinian government that would slowly but surely move it from isolation to pragmatism. It is essential to note that the Arab Spring had a direct bearing in this respect. The demonstrations in the Arab world initiated protests in Gaza calling for national reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah. "This will create a new political islam in which a coalition is the main goal; not to monopolize the regime", says Joel Greenberg (2011). Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of the reconciliation talks with Fatah, which will

constitute a key test of Hamas's willingness to share power. Thus, both parties either reconcile or risk being "ousted from office". The Cairo Agreement was signed in April 2011, with the help of the Egyptian mediation; demonstrating that Hamas was indeed willing to change its initial goals and demands (Lovlie and Knudsen 2013, 57). Dag Tuastad emphasizes the consequences of Hamas's entry to the Palestinian National Council. For Tuastad "Hamas's entry into the PNC would, first of all, imply increased democratization rather than radicalization within the PLO, and equally within Hamas" (Tuastad 2013). Thus, and for the first time in the history of Hamas, the party is demanding integration without asking the PLO to change its charter during the pre-election phase. The very process of inclusion in the political sphere, backed by the geopolitical variable, Egypt, Turkey and Qatar in this case, will leave Hamas far from Iranian pressure to shock the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. All this suggests that geopolitics, more so than domestic or organizational variables, is clearly responsible for Hamas's moderation or the lack of it.

In sum, Hamas and Hezbollah have been directly but unequally affected by the Arab Spring. One can say that the balance sheet has not been proportionally equal between both organizations. Hezbollah, was negatively impacted than Hamas. The Shia 'a party was damaged due to its double standard vis-a- vis the Arab Spring uprisings but also and more particularly due to its involvement in defense of Bashar in Syria. Hamas has shown that it was capable of dealing more successfully with the Arab uprising.

It is hard to talk about the Arab Spring's direct effect on the moderation of religious parties such as Hamas and Hezbollah without bringing up the importance of the geopolitical variable's effect in this respect. While the geopolitical variable in the case of Hamas has displayed a somehow linear process in its path towards moderation, this was not the case for the Lebanese Hezbollah. We cannot say that the geopolitical variable has moderated Hamas per se but we can say that it helped in the party's transformation: the latest manifestation of these transformations being the reconciliatory deal between Fatah and Hamas in Gaza on 24 April, 2014. The move of the Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas was faced with anger as it took Israelis and their intelligence apparatus by surprise. Furthermore, Abbas was criticized for coping with the extremists: Hamas being designated as a terrorist organization by both Israel and the United States. Perhaps the reconciliation is only temporary, perhaps Hamas will never lead Hamas into Gaza and Mahmoud Abbas will never give Hamas the benefit of ruling the West Bank. However, one thing is for sure, time only will determine if the geopolitical variable will keep on pushing for further moderation in Hamas's case thus making the process a linear one.

In the case of Hezbollah, the moderation process was not a linear one but rather reversible. Although the Party of God tried to moderate at so many instances by creating a political platform and a political program, it failed to achieve complete moderation, especially with its weapons arsenal and geopolitical obligations. One can say that Iran is the geopolitical variable that posed an impediment to Hezbollah's moderation. Tehran invested materially and politically, in Hezbollah, its geopolitical proxy, and used it to defend its geopolitical interests

in Syria (Salloukh, 2014). Not only did the party's control in Qusayr "prove a game changer" in the war but it also reflected Hezbollah's enthusiasm in using its arms once its interests were threatened. Hamas and Hezbollah agreed to disagree on their stance vis-avis the war in Syria while keeping their strategic goal, fighting Israel, intact. Total divorce will not take place between these two entities; however, the current reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas might change the geopolitical dynamic once again and the future may change the weather forecast yet again for Hamas and Hezbollah in the midst of a changing Arab climate.



## Bibliography

- Abu Amr, Z. (1993, June). Hamas: A historical and political background. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, XXII(4), 5-19.
- Bermeo, N. (1992, April). Democracy and the lessons of dictatorship. *Comparative Politics*, 24(3), 273-291.
- Cambanis, T. (2012, September 21). How the Arab Spring killed Hezbollah. *The New Republic*. Retrieved from [http://www.realclearworld.com/2012/09/21/how\\_the\\_arab\\_spring\\_killed\\_hezbollah\\_140394.html](http://www.realclearworld.com/2012/09/21/how_the_arab_spring_killed_hezbollah_140394.html)
- Clarck, J. (2006, November). The conditions of Islamist moderation: Unpacking cross ideological cooperation in Jordan. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 38(4), 539-560.
- El-Ghobashy, M. (2005). The metamorphosis of the Egyptian muslim brothers. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Retrieved from <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=MES>
- Ghaddar, H. (2013, August 26). The marriage and divorce of Hamas and Hezbollah. *Wilson Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/islamists/article/the-marriage-and-divorce-hamas-and-hezbollah>
- Ghorayeb, A. S. (2002). *Hizbu'llah politics and religion*. N.p.: Pluto Press
- Gruber, S. (2007, May 31). Hamas: Pragmatic ideology. *Al Nakhlah*. Retrieved from <http://alnakhlah.org/2007/05/31/hamas-pragmatic-ideology-by-shai-gruber/>

- Gunning, J. (2004). Peace with Hamas? The transforming potential of political participation. [Abstract]. *International Affairs*, 80(2), 233-255. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2004.00381.x/abstract>
- Hamas to Hezbollah: Leave Syria and focus on fighting Israel instead. (2013, June 16). *The Jerusalem Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Hamas-to-Hezbollah-Leave-Syria-and-focus-on-fighting-Israel-instead-316821>
- Hariq, J. P. (2005). *Hezbollah: The changing face of terrorism*. N.p.: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd.
- Hroub, K. (2006). *Hamas: A beginner's guide* (2nd ed.). N.p.: Pluto Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/27934039?uid=3737968&uid=2129&uid=2&uid=70&uid=4&sid=21104257325813>
- Kahl, C. (2012, March). Not time to attack Iran: Why war should be a last resort. *Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved from <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137031/colin-h-kahl/not-time-to-attack-iran>
- Kubikova, N. (2009). Political inclusion as a key factor to moderate islamists: The international community's choice of policy impacts on Hamas's pragmatic or radical tendencies. *Perspectives*, 17(2), 139-162. Retrieved from [http://mercury.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/137770/ichaptersection\\_single\\_document/36f12133-a498-4ef7-b484-8d9d08acdee6/en/02\\_09chapter7.pdf](http://mercury.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/137770/ichaptersection_single_document/36f12133-a498-4ef7-b484-8d9d08acdee6/en/02_09chapter7.pdf)
- Lovli, F., & Knudsen, A. (2013). Hamas and the Arab Spring. *Middle East Policy Council*, XX(3), 56-59.
- Meshal, S., & Sela, A. (2000). *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, violence and coexistence*. N.p.: Colombia University Press.

- Mitnick, J. (2012, February 13). Hamas rift opens over Fatah deal. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052970204062704577219441107955730>
- Nason, J. (2013). For Hamas the Arab Spring has been disastrous. *Tablet Mag*. Retrieved from <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/155652/hamas-on-the-edge>
- Norton, A. R. (2007). *Hezbollah: A short history*. N.p.: Princeton University Press.
- Norton, R. A. (2000). Hizballah and the Israeli withdrawal from Southern Lebanon. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 30(1), 22-35. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2676479>
- Perlov, O. (2013, October 8). The end of Muqawama? Hamas and Hezbollah face reform or collapse: Discourse on the Lebanese and Palestinian social networks. *The Institute for National Security Studies*. Retrieved from <http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=5775>
- Pipes, D. (1998). Distinguishing between Islam and Islamism. Retrieved from <http://www.danielpipes.org/954/distinguishing-between-islam-and-islamism>.
- Rabil, R. G. (2007). Has Hezbollah's rise come at Syria's expense. *The Middle East Quarterly*, XIV(4), 43-51.
- Robinson, G. (2004). *Hamas a social movement*. Indiana, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Salloukh, B. F. (2014, April). Lebanon - Where next for Hezbollah: Resistance or reform? *Conciliation Resources*, 1(25), 100-104. Retrieved from [http://www.c-r.org/sites/default/files/accord25\\_Lebanon.pdf](http://www.c-r.org/sites/default/files/accord25_Lebanon.pdf)

Schwedler, J. (2011). Can islamists become moderate? Rethinking the inclusion-moderation hypothesis. *Cambridge Journal Online*, 63, 347-376.

Shiqaqi, K. (2006). The Palestinian elections: Sweeping victory, uncertain mandate. *Journal of Democracy*, 17, 116-130.

Schueffan, D., & Sing, M. (2011, October 24). Arab Spring, Arab Storm: Implications for Israel. *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/arab-spring-arab-storm-implications-for-israel>

Tamimi, A. (2007). *Hamas: A history from within*. N.p.: Olive Branch Press.

Truffer, P. (n.d.). The softening of Hamas - Moderation through political participation. *Offiziere*. Retrieved from <http://www.offiziere.ch/?p=7216>