



Hezbollah: A Proletarian Party with an Islamic Manifesto – A Sociopolitical Analysis of Islamist Populism in Lebanon and the Middle East

Imad Salamey & Frederic Pearson

To cite this article: Imad Salamey & Frederic Pearson (2007) Hezbollah: A Proletarian Party with an Islamic Manifesto – A Sociopolitical Analysis of Islamist Populism in Lebanon and the Middle East, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 18:3, 416-438, DOI: [10.1080/09592310701674358](https://doi.org/10.1080/09592310701674358)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09592310701674358>



Published online: 03 Jan 2008.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 573



[View related articles](#)



Citing articles: 5 [View citing articles](#)

Hezbollah: A Proletarian Party with an Islamic Manifesto – A Sociopolitical Analysis of Islamist Populism in Lebanon and the Middle East

IMAD SALAMEY* & FREDERIC PEARSON**

*Political Science and International Affairs, Lebanese American University, **Center for Peace and Conflict Studies and Political Science Department, Wayne State University

ABSTRACT This article examines the rising contention between a global foreign policy promoting liberal democracy in the Middle East and Islamist rejectionism. It provides a sociopolitical analysis of the phenomena of radical Islamist politics while focusing on the experience of Hezbollah in Lebanon. It associates the growth of Hezbollah, a political movement seen in various forms in several countries, with social class dynamics that have been antagonised by social inequality, opportunistic leadership, the importation of Western-ordered democracy and by perceived foreign intervention. By examining the root dynamic of Hezbollah in Lebanon, this article argues that poverty has provided the fertile ground for the growth of Islamic populism as a revolutionary movement and has represented a major reason for the rejection of democratisation and political reform. A global foreign policy that seeks to uproot extremism in favour of state-building and the advancement of democracy in the Middle East needs to be reoriented so as to help undermine class inequality and to strengthen government-sponsored public services programmes for the underclass.

Framing Foreign Policy Response to Islamist Movements in the Middle East

Who would have thought that religion, once termed by Karl Marx the ‘opiate of the masses’, would one day characterise the most militant of

Correspondence Addresses: Imad Salamey, Lebanese American University, Social Sciences and Education Division, P.O. Box 13-5053, Chouran-Beirut 1102 2801–Lebanon. Email: imad.salamey@lau.edu.lb Frederic Pearson, Wayne State University, Center for Peace and Conflict Studies and Political Science Dept., Wayne State University, 2320 Faculty/Administration Building, 656 W. Kirby, Detroit, Michigan 48202, U.S.A. Email: ab3440@wayne.edu

class-based 'anti-capitalist' political movements? Indeed, Islamists have succeeded where most Marxists and secular reformers have failed in the Middle East. Religious demagogues, charged with resentment toward the national bourgeoisie and Western-imposed lifestyles, have prompted the most appealing, mobilising and radicalising movement among the broad masses of the poor. By forcefully and effectively confronting enemies such as Israel and neocolonialism they also have addressed the chronic historical sense of humiliation facing Arab societies.

While it has been proceeding in various forms for more than two decades, many scholars have been intrigued by the phenomenal rise of Islamist movements and have offered a range of explanations for this upsurge. According to Masoud Kazemzadeh, three principal competing traditions provide theoretical interpretations: Islamic exceptionalism (cultural relativists, neo-Cold War warriors and Islamic 'Fundamentalists'); comparative fundamentalisms; and class analysis.¹ The first asserts, in different perceptual outlooks, that Islamic 'fundamentalism' must be examined as a phenomenon on its own.² Alternatively, comparativists argue that it is part of wider global development inspired by the rise of religious movements.³ In contrast, class analysis uses social scientific concepts to explain Islamic resurgence as a political movement that aims to achieve class interest of a particular social group. Adherents of the third paradigm include Farhad Kazemi (1980), Sami Zubaida (1993), Ervand Abrahamian (1993), Misav Parsa (1989), Fred Halliday (1996) and Adam Webb (2006) among others.⁴

Each one of the different traditions has implicated a distinct foreign policy outlook. For instance, adopting an Islamic exceptionalism paradigm necessitates examining the peculiarity of the phenomena at hand, so as to assess the degree to which US or Western foreign policy in the Middle East can be reformulated so as to defeat, accommodate or 'contain' Islamic radicalism. Eric Watkins, for example, attributes the growth of Islamic fundamentalism to the bi-standards of US foreign policy, seeking positive Arab relations while providing near total support of Israel.⁵ From this perspective, undermining Islamic extremism necessitates appropriate rebalancing of the US foreign policy. Abdesalam M. Maghraoui recommends that such a containment strategy can be further achieved through an 'Islamic Renewal' where support is relocated to moderate-reform-minded Islamic groups.⁶ Of course, from the opposite side of the spectrum is the security anti-terrorism perception, where the war on terror, in addition to other remedies, is considered the primary means of defending democracy and the 'Western way of life' and defeating Islamic extremism.⁷

The comparative perspective, on the other hand, draws from historical experiences and responses that have succeeded in undermining similar trends. S.V.R. Nasr, for example, concludes that a foreign policy

strategy of support for increased democratisation would guarantee the inclusion of dissenters and extremists in the political process, and thus moderate their radical appeal.⁸ In the comparative perspective, of course, one notes that various strands of extreme Islamic movements exist, contrasting for example ‘millennial’ movements for broad regional or global goals with more localised and reactive movements such as those among rival clans in failed or feeble states such as Somalia or among newly emergent ‘Islamic’ political parties, Sunni and Shi’a, in post-Saddam Iraq. Foreign policy is complicated in that such groups might not agree among themselves and in that millennial movements might try and manipulate such local groups to their advantage.⁹

Compared to both Islamic exceptionalism and comparativist views, the socio-economic analysis of Islamist resurgence highlights a further dilemma in foreign policy formation. Class analysis, particularly in explaining the socio-economic dynamic of Islamic fundamentalism, implies economic reform measures that undermine foreign policy doctrines and global economic outlooks, as, for example, in the ‘free market’ approaches of Western powers and international financial organisations. While such self-interested reform efforts are not impossible, they may be unlikely, given doctrinaire approaches to capitalism and limited government. In addition contemporary globalist policy, including elements of both nineteenth-century liberalism and twentieth-century conservatism as seen in the US, emphasises, in addition to fostering buying power among potential markets across the world, removing trade barriers, privatising the public sector, pushing for the free flow of capital and investment, reducing bureaucracy and regulations and abandoning command-based economy.¹⁰ While references are made to reducing poverty and corruption, notes that would agree with some Islamist precepts, support is wanting for major shifts of wealth from advantaged to disadvantaged classes, as seen in the reaction to assertive ‘populists’ such as Venezuela’s Hugo Chavez. Though decidedly secular in orientation, the latter has even discussed common resistance to global economic hegemonism with Islamists in Iran.

Islamists themselves do not reject all forms of capitalism as long as Islamic legal traditions and applications are maintained and as long as their autonomous power is promoted. Those who would undercut Islam’s class appeal range from reform advocates who desire to ‘put a human face on capitalism and globalisation’ to those proposing the eradication of global capitalism as a mean to win the struggle against regressive religious movements. As Lal Khan put it, what is needed is ‘a political programme – attacking imperialist exploitation – and the drudgery of landlordism and capitalism, as necessary to seriously combat fundamentalism’.¹¹

Socio-economic perspectives on foreign policy remain the least studied in terms of Islamic appeal and the most difficult to apply in policy terms,

particularly when they contradict the prevailing global socio-economic agenda. Thus framing a responsive foreign policy position to 'contain' Islamic extremism raises crucial questions: to what extent, if any, has the radical Islamic movement emerged as a direct consequence of deteriorating class conditions in regions such as the Middle East; why have global and bilateral policies failed to be constructive and responsive in engaging or coopting such radical reactions; and, finally, if marked socio-economic improvement is realised in Islamic regions, will that obviate or elevate the level of revolutionary fervour?

Establishing the Class Link

Increasingly studies have focused on the link between terrorism, political extremism and economic conditions. While notable terrorists such as Osama Bin Laden and associates have been anything but poverty-stricken, considerable evidence points to the role of economic deprivation as an underpinning for effective mobilisation, recruitment and dedication to extremist causes.¹² Based on such perceptions, promoting economic justice and reducing inequality have become the basis of increased advocacy in counter-terror policy.¹³ Significant to these studies is the contribution of Brian Burgoon, who supports the notion that effective social welfare policies undermine terrorism. He has demonstrated that:

social welfare policies – including social security, unemployment, and health and education spending – affect preferences and capacities of social actors in ways that, on balance, discourage terrorism: by reducing poverty, inequality, and socioeconomic insecurity, thereby diminishing incentives to commit or tolerate terrorism, and by weakening extremist political and religious organizations and practice that provide economic and cognitive security where public safety nets are lacking.¹⁴

Analysts of popular rebellion such as Ted R. Gurr, however, have also noted that the most destitute seldom join insurgencies. It is the transitional communities, those who have risen above abject poverty but have not yet reached a level of welfare commensurate with that of others, that take to arms and employ violence to rectify their comparative disadvantages and frustrations, especially if they also experience ethnic discrimination.¹⁵

Promoting social welfare in the Middle East has been sometimes overshadowed and other times associated in recent years with calls for democracy and political reform, seemingly premised on the social science claim that a peace exists among democratic states.¹⁶ One form of such strategic thought came to be known as 'The New Greater Middle East' initiative, a US foreign policy vision, associated with the war in Iraq, that prioritised political participation, institutional reform, gender equality,

minority and ethnic rights, rule of law, privatisation and modernisation as keys for the ultimate realisation of a stable, prosperous and peaceful Middle East.¹⁷ The G8 Summit at Sea Island in 2004 adopted the 'Greater Middle East' doctrine wherein priority in the 'Broader Middle East and North Africa' was given to political, social, cultural and economic spheres. In regard to the latter, which was the last stated priority, the G8 established supporting entrepreneurship as key to economic reform.

11.3 In the economic sphere, creating jobs is the number one priority of many countries in the region. To expand opportunity, and promote conditions in which the private sector can create jobs, we will work with governments and business leaders to promote entrepreneurship, expand trade and investment, increase access to capital, support financial reforms, secure property rights, promote transparency and fight corruption. Promotion of intra-regional trade will be a priority for economic development of the Broader Middle East and North Africa.¹⁸

The G8, however, has been confronted by the reality of war-borne dislocation, failing entrepreneurship and emerging radical Islam throughout the region.¹⁹ In 1997 the US National Intelligence Council anticipated that 'the increasing number of young unemployed men will exacerbate social and political tensions throughout the region'.²⁰ Evidently the G8 and US policy-makers have failed to offer this expanding mass of unemployed population any substantial hope or economic intervention beyond prescriptions for failing national entrepreneurship, standing to lose in a highly competitive global market dominated by major powers and developing states which have promoted mass-based technical education and high levels of foreign investment (such as India).

Alternatively, and with extensive success, radical Islamists have provided networks of social services and welfare-based sub-economies for the poor and the unemployed. Building upon and perhaps exceeding prior efforts by the PLO in the Palestinian territories, Hamas's economic public welfare network, along with its perceived anti-corruption and hard-line policy on Israel, not only guaranteed itself wide public support, but also helped the movement grasp electoral victory and political power. Similar 'democratic' political success stories can be found among Islamist organisations in Iraq (Jaysh Al-Mahdi), in Jordan and Egypt (Islamic Brotherhood), in Lebanon (Hezbollah) and other countries such as Yemen, Morocco, Algeria and Sudan. Nikki Keddie's analysis of Islamist groups in the Middle East concludes that:

[t]he considerable post-colonial failure of governmental solutions to socioeconomic and cultural problems has brought a growing alienation between people and their governments. In the Muslim world, governments have often found it difficult to suppress Islamist movements because of their decentralized organisation, use of mosques and religious networks and their increasing popularity resulting from their provision of social services, especially to the poor.²¹

It is particularly these social services that have provided Islamists with wide public support while, despite the appeal of the global economy, the USA's 'Greater Middle East', suspected as a neocolonial control mechanism, received condemnation on the 'streets'. Similar to Keddie's views on identifying the causes behind radical mobilisation, scholars have noted the rapid global change that is leaving behind masses of the economically disadvantaged who, in turn, become subject to radical 'social mobilisation' that outruns 'institutionalisation' and, ultimately, induces a revolutionary volatility.²² Ironically some trends along these lines exist in America's own inner-cities as well, though with generally lower levels of political mobilisation.

In this article we take a closer look at Hezbollah in Lebanon, one seemingly successful manifestation of Islamist political organisation that has taken an active role in Lebanese and cross-border politics; we examine the nature of the party's: socio-economic roots, propaganda, political tactics, mobilisation, alliance-making and alternative revolutionary agenda. The intention is to reveal the extent to which Hezbollah has grown on the backlash of local and global policies that hardly address the immediate socio-economic conditions of the poor. It shows how such conditions have instigated a revolutionary party dynamic with class-based public support and regional backing that extend beyond strict religious adherence.²³ The revolutionary development of Hezbollah in Lebanon indicates a growing wedge between the social classes and increasing polarisation in global visions.

Conceivably the appeal of radical Islam cannot be offset without solutions to major political conflicts such as those involving Israel and the reduction of Western presence in the region. However, if the socio-economic characterisation of Islam's class based appeal is accurate, it would appear that radical Islamic appeal cannot be effectively reduced without global, regional, and national socio-economic initiatives prioritising the reduction of inequality and providing the 'underclass' with institutionally sponsored social service networks, housing, educational and employment opportunities.

An Anti-Bourgeois Vanguard Party

While general sympathies have been growing across many sectors of Middle Eastern society, hardcore support for Islamist parties tends to come from within the poorest urban slums, from workers in factories and from the rural villages where support for Islamist groups such as Hezbollah is nurtured and cultivated as a counterweight to what is seen as class-based exploitation. According to a nationwide public opinion poll conducted by Statistics Lebanon with 400 participants in June 2006, Hezbollah drew most of its support from lower socio-economic

groups; 81 per cent of those expressing support for Hezbollah were of lower socio-economic strata with monthly income below US\$1,000; 38.6 per cent had below middle school education, 45.6 per cent received secondary education, and only 15.8 per cent had college education.²⁴ Having been left out of the processes of globalisation, democratisation, modernisation and state building; with hardly enough to eat or a place to sleep, the poorest classes in Lebanon have created their own political allegiances. For those who have nothing to lose, Hezbollah has shown the way: there are a whole world and a heaven to conquer.

A revolutionary styled vanguard party, Hezbollah has offered a permanent class struggle with godly support that links national liberation with cultural cleansing and class emancipation. While indigenously Lebanese, centred in the Shi'a communities, Hezbollah's revolution has been Trotskyite in its international appeal, for no national borders, doctrinal differences or democratic stages precondition its revolutionary appeal.²⁵ The party is internationalist in its dynamics and has succeeded in linking the poorest Lebanese Shi'ites with Sunnis in Gaza, Palestinian refugees across the region, 'anti-imperialists' in Iraq and Syria, revolutionaries in Iran and anti-American/Western movements throughout the Middle East.²⁶ Middle Eastern Islamists such as Hezbollah, along with their Iranian and Arab allies, have proved to be unwavering obstacles against a US-sponsored 'Greater Middle East' initiative involving the attempted installation of pro-Western 'democracies' even as the Islamists themselves take part in democratic processes and parliaments.

Despite its highly attractive appeal for a wide sector of middle-class groups, professionals and entrepreneurs, who have long awaited the prospect of democratisation and global integration in the region, American-sponsored democratisation has hardly won the 'hearts or minds' of the modern classes in most states, let alone the poor.²⁷ While prosperity was initially promised in the 'liberation' of Iraq, for the economically dispossessed, estranged democratisation provided no direct answer to hardship, violence and widespread unemployment.²⁸ Women's equality, human rights, electoral participation, minority rights, rule of law, environmental protection, political reform, while compelling aspirations, have remained clichés to the vast majority of the masses struggling against a persistent sense of cultural humiliation and for daily water, bread and butter.²⁹ Worse, democratisation, as such, has increasingly appeared as a hostile movement whose end result is strengthening corrupt elements of government, alienating ethnic and sectarian communities, barring disfavoured (usually Islamist) parties from taking office, facilitating foreign intervention and investment, failing to solve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and undermining the underclass.

For such reasons, as well as their well-developed social welfare service functions modelled on Iranian experience, Hezbollah and other authoritarian styled Islamist groups have gained greater appeal among the Lebanese poor than any democratic movement. As a consequence, certain modernist leftist groups that have championed democracy and/or social justice, despite their opposition to globalisation excesses, began to emerge at odds with the largely poor masses. For reasons of secular reform and anti-Syrian nationalism after 2005, the Lebanese Democratic Left, a group of ex-Communists and socialists, found their secular programme for democratic government in general harmony with the right-wing Hariri-led Future Movement and at odds with Hezbollah and its supporters.³⁰ Hezbollah's agitation campaign among the poor and the opportunity afforded by Israel's bombardment and invasion in July–August 2006 further elevated the party as both a proletarian vanguard and nationalist standard-bearer leading the struggle against a 'Western imposed imperialist democracy' in the Middle East.³¹

These developments have spotlighted various forms of perceived hypocrisy in US policy. While praising and backing Lebanon's new government and the democratic resistance to previous Syrian domination, US policy, alongside Israel's ill-fated and destructive anti-Hezbollah campaign of 2006, has undermined and discredited those very elements of Lebanese reform. While speaking for democracy, Washington clearly draws the line against devolution of power to duly elected Islamist and extremist organisations. While prioritising counter-terror, US military equipment has been used to inflict destruction if not terror on civilian populations. While speaking of the virtues of private enterprise, American lawmakers fail to give preferences to imports or the indigenous industries of stricken developing states.³²

For the vast majority of poor, democratisation and globalisation have been associated with an ever-increasing social inequality, with affluence concentrated in metropolitan areas and among the educated, leaving rural areas and urban suburbs to poverty.³³ Democracy has emerged, if anything, in direct antagonism with the sociopolitical conditions of the underprivileged. In most cases, it ensures the rule of law and strengthens government control, with implications of removing illegal housing, controlling illegal labour, imposing taxes, enforcing city zoning codes and expanding governmental authority, implying greater dispossession and less security for the poor. While job opportunities have filtered down for some, the general gaps in education and opportunity as well as low wage scales have limited democracy's and globalisation's promise of prosperity. It was relatively easy for the Hezbollah leadership to capture the imagination and sympathy of poverty-stricken peoples and those fearing the domination of alien social groups, secular and religious powers. Indeed, traditional advocates of the mass Shi'a

populations in southern Lebanon, such as the Amal movement, have had to give way and join with the more dynamic Hezbollah leadership (see Figure 1).

Capturing these sentiments, Hezbollah, as other Islamists, have incorporated alternative campaigns to empower the poor and weaken the 'establishment'. Hezbollah-controlled urban slums and rural areas have emerged as closed pockets, operating as states within the state and beyond the reach of the central authority. Following a pattern set during the Iranian revolution, the party uses mosques and religious centres as civil courts and establishes religious school networks, hospitals,



Figure 1. Distribution of religious groups in Lebanon. *Source:* C1A, 1983.

orphanages, social service centres, media outlets, boy scouts, civil defence and *mujahedeen* fighters all organised independently from central state power.³⁴ These form in distinction from ‘civil society’ organisations which the West tends to see as the building-blocks of democracy – professional and voluntary social service organisations and ‘non-profits’ which bind people together across cultural lines, a civic model that has some manifestations (e.g. Rotary clubs and professional organisations) but has hardly succeeded broadly in the Middle East.³⁵

Thus Hezbollah-controlled territories began to emerge as a base of pride for the poor, while instigating greater fears and concerns for the wealthy and middle classes, as well as for non-Shi’a and non-Muslim sectors of the society. These territories have become refuges for low-paid labourers, the unemployed and outlawed renegades, providing a safe haven for those who have not been able to afford high-rental housing, state taxes and the comparative luxury of Westernised cities. While daily routines and family responsibilities dominate the lives of most poor people, their mass concentration can appear to be a revolutionary reservoir ready to explode at any moment against the sociopolitical status quo.

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, once served by secular PLO social-service organs, have emerged as natural allies to Hezbollah and associated Islamist movements since they too have been left out of the growing economic prosperity. For them, the creation of a strong Lebanese government could be, arguably, the worst scenario, and they have fiercely battled the emergence of strong Lebanese authority since the late 60s.³⁶ Their experiences with strong Arab governments stood witness to massacres and suppressions as experienced in Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Kuwait. Devastating socio-economic conditions inside and outside refugee camps remained the major reason for their sympathy and support for Hezbollah, though a rift may have occurred with the ultra-radical Sunni based Palestinian–Lebanese fighting of 2007.³⁷

Thus an important reason for Hezbollah’s rise to power in Lebanon as well as that of Islamists elsewhere has been its ability to transform masses of adherents into a coherent movement against the social ‘stability’ of the country. The party was quick to mobilise its supporters behind economic demands, often in public demonstrations against government policies and regulations, frequently threatening governmental collapse. Hezbollah continued to dampen entrepreneurial interests by its ability to spread mob actions throughout commercial districts and to obstruct economic and political life at will.³⁸ The disaffected rallied behind the party with enthusiasm, having grown frustrated with economic growth that targeted sectors such as tourism while urban areas were invaded by ‘alien’ Western lifestyles.³⁹

Diffusing Bourgeois Opposition

Opposition to the party from within its own sectarian ranks has been muted for important reasons. First, the party was able to threaten dissidents and renegades. Opposition risked community isolation and accusation of treason and infidelity. Additionally, the party represented an important political outlet by preserving power and access for elite Shi'ites within the Lebanese confessional structure. By its sectarian mobilising power, its participation in government and through its respective sectarian elites, Hezbollah has made political gains that retained important public offices to the advantage of the Lebanese Shi'ite community. This was manifest in the party's alliance with its own national sectarian bourgeoisie, such as the Amal Movement, with the latter kept in close sectarian rank. After all, the Shi'ite national bourgeoisie recognised that Hezbollah, with its growing constituency, was a crucial force for their own political survival amid the country's sectarian power struggles.

Internal sectarian unity further helped the party to outmanoeuvre its political opponents by gaining legitimacy through the ballot box and by joining official governmental ranks. This allowed Hezbollah to utilise public forums for its own purposes, often by using governmental institutions and the press against the government itself. Party candidates headed electoral lists, established electoral alliances and coordinated effective election campaigns to win parliamentary seats and municipal offices. After electoral sweeps in their districts, Hezbollah MPs not only entered municipalities, parliament and the cabinet for the purpose of accessing public services and resources for their constituencies, but also used these official offices as public forums to expose governmental corruption, criticise policies and obstruct strong central authority.⁴⁰ Thus, in a bold duality which other parties were ineffective in resisting, the revolutionary character of the party was preserved while government institutions were subjugated to the party's own ends.

Fearing a solid opposition being crystallised against its programme by government middle- to upper-class based bourgeois parties (known as the March 14th Alliance – see Table 1), Hezbollah aimed to break the ranks of its political foes. It sought a coalition with a wide national network of politically marginalised individuals and opposition groups (known as the March 8th Alliance – see Table 1), pitting them against government parties while providing them with the necessary financial and political support.⁴¹ Its coalition-building opportunism and success against government parties was best seen when the party struck an alliance with the Maronite Christian-based Free Patriotic Movement of General Michel Aoun (see 'Aoun-led Alliance' in Table 1), a deal that guaranteed the party's support across sectarian lines and denied the government parties' claims of an absolute national majority. These

Table 1. Distribution of political alliances, 2005 Lebanese Parliament

Alliance	Main bloc/leader	Leading party/affiliation	Main/leading confession	Parliamentary size	%
March 14th Alliance				71	55.47
	Hariri	Future Movement	Sunni	39	30.47
	Jumblat	Progressive Socialist Party	Druze	16	12.50
	Ja'Ja	Lebanese Forces	Maronite	4	3.13
	Atallah	The Democratic Left	None/secular	1	0.78
	Ahdab	Renewal Democratic Movement	Sunni	1	0.78
	Qornet Shehwane	Independent	Maronite	7	5.47
	Tripoli Coalition	Independent	Sunni	3	2.34
March 8th Alliance				35	27.34
	Berri	Amal Movement	Shi'ite	16	12.50
	Nasrallah	Hezbollah	Shi'ite	15	11.72
	Baath Party	Baath Party	None/Secular	1	0.78
	Syrian Nationalist Party	Syrian Social Nationalist Party	None/Secular	1	0.78
	Kataab (pro-Syrian)	Kataab (pro-Syrian)	Maronite	1	0.78
	Saad	Nasserites	Sunni	1	0.78
Aoun-led Alliance				21	16.41
	Aoun	Free Patriotic Movement	Maronite	14	10.94
	Skaff	Many	Maronite	5	3.91
	Murr	Many	Orthodox	2	1.56
Independent	Dakash	Independent	1	0.78	
Total			128	100.00	

Source: EU Election Mission to Lebanon 2005, Final Report on the Parliamentary Election

alliances and political tactics provided Hezbollah with the ability to operate from within the government to disrupt the formation of coherent pro-government policies; at the same time it allowed the party to orchestrate opposition from the outside as well.

Working within a complex Lebanese socio-sectarian-regional environment (see Figure 1), the party succeeded in nationalising support for its agenda well before the events of summer 2006. Despite its radical Islamic appeal, Hezbollah had popularised itself as a voice for other deprived socio-sectarian groups, including certain Lebanese Christians, a remarkable achievement by any measure. It emerged as the party of the oppressed, opposing government policies and privatisation efforts that targeted public programmes and the safety nets of the lower classes. The party's anti-Western, anti-Israeli cultural rhetoric further mobilised traditional and conservative elements across the religious divide. For these reasons, anti-Hezbollah groups, particularly the March 14th Alliance, failed to isolate the party or undermine its popularity. On the contrary, the party appeared to draw support from larger cross-sectional groups throughout the country in support of its political programme.⁴²

This momentum finally allowed Hezbollah to wage an unprecedented anti-government campaign that culminated in November 2006 with the resignation of the opposition ministers from the cabinet, pushing to the street massive anti-government demonstrations that literally mobilised half the country's population, organising an open sit-in in downtown Beirut that brought Lebanon to a standstill, imposing a one-day general strike that shut down all public and private sectors, and bringing the country to the edge of an open conflict and civil war.

Perhaps among the most strategically significant characteristics of Hezbollah has been its accumulation of weapons and its well-trained and disciplined internal security apparatus that has remained beyond the government's control. These capabilities were impressively displayed during Israel's invasion following the killing and capture of Israeli soldiers in the Lebanese-Israeli border area. The party's historical reputation as being the sole force against Israeli occupation in the south, and as a resistance movement opposed to national security infringements, stripped the Lebanese government of the ability to disarm it or to decrease its military presence in an estimated quarter of Lebanese territories. The party defended its acquisition of weapons through the pretext of continuous Israeli threats and rejected efforts aimed at restricting its resistance forces.⁴³ Thus the party has accumulated all crucial political and military foundations to establish a quasi-state operating within the state.

In sum, Hezbollah ensured itself a solid backing from a large lower socio-economic section of the population whose interests seem to run in contradiction with the promises of democratisation, modernisation and state-building. The party's political advantages were elevated by

outmanoeuvring opponents, establishing a wide national anti-government coalition, using public institutions for the government's own demise and effectively confronting Israel, both during the Israeli occupation of the predominantly Shi'a Southern region before the year 2000 and later during the Israeli military campaigns of 2006. Significant to the party's power was its ability to immanently move massive anti-government demonstrations as well as its ability to spur its supporters to mob uprising in commercial centres across the country, thus sabotaging civil peace.⁴⁴

Joining an Anti-Imperialist International Alliance

Hezbollah's strength was not drawn from national class-based support and a revolutionary programme alone. Rather, it was manifest in the party's successfully linking its struggle to topple democratisation, modernisation and stronger government with that of a wider regional network of states and groups standing to lose power with the implementation of the American-sponsored 'Greater Middle East' paradigm. Nation states such as Iran and Syria, along with such groups as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Palestinian and Iraqi insurgent militia joined the core of this regional revolutionary alliance.⁴⁵ In turn, Hezbollah has become the leader in the struggle against the new political order by opening the battleground against Israel in a bid to support Hamas and mobilise the Arab street against the US-Israeli camp, thereby sparking the largest anti-American grass-roots protest movement in the Middle East. After all, it is the confrontation with Israel and Hezbollah's remarkable, though still limited, tactical successes that have given the party its widest regional appeal to call for an open battle on behalf of the *ummah*, which was reduced in actuality to an appeal for cross-regional class solidarity against the invasion of perceived democratic imperialism.⁴⁶

For this reason, many conservative, monarchical, wealthy and Sunni or Christian-based factions and Arab governments across the region also grew to fear and sporadically criticise the movement. Sunni regional initiatives involving states such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, in consultation with Western powers, to contain the expansion of Shi'a power as seen in Iraq and Lebanon have been evident since 2006. Yet the more Hezbollah appeared to succeed where other Arab nationalists and leaders had failed, especially militarily, the more difficult and embarrassing it became for critics to remain vocal.⁴⁷

Hezbollah's strategic regional importance became evident when it was able to fill the power gap left by the Syrian pullout from Lebanon in May 2005. It was Hezbollah's struggle against anti-Syrian Lebanese domestic groups that gained the party crucial backing from the Syrian-Iranian regimes and further strengthened the Iranian-Syrian-Hezbollah-Hammas front. Its consistent struggle against the predominantly anti-Syrian

Lebanese cabinet and parliament helped shield the Syrian regime from an all-out international condemnation over a widely believed Syrian-sponsored assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.⁴⁸ In fact, and after two years of consistent opposition, Hezbollah was able to delay and undermine an all-out international tribunal against an alleged Syrian link with the Hariri assassination.

Hence, despite the party's small size, its dependence for armament and financing on regional powers such as Syria and Iran and its place within a sectarian political system in a very small nation, Hezbollah's significance and influence have been demonstrated in its ability to instigate tactical battles while mobilising the support and aspirations of large economically deprived and frustrated social groups across Lebanon, the Middle East and Muslim states. Hezbollah gained the political initiative in both domestic struggle for economic justice as well as in the international struggle against Israel and the US, preventing regional governments and political opponents from presenting any serious challenge.⁴⁹

Seen in this light, Hezbollah has emerged as a revolutionary proletarian party with an Islamic manifesto par excellence. Its model has inspired greater militancy in groups in the region, who have found among the dispossessed and disillusioned a fertile ground for a mass opposition against outside and non-Muslim regional domination, groups including Hamas and Islamic Jihad among Palestinians, as well as Jaysh Al-Mahdi in Iraq. Ironically, the greater Hezbollah's success in resisting Israel through guerrilla and armed tactics, the less the apparent need for more primitive forms of terrorism and resistance, such as suicide bombing missions.

A key strategy in this new wave of resistance by entities such as Hezbollah and Syria, a state that seeks to maintain both access to the West and resistance to Western domination, is the manipulation of social and regional stability to achieve political demands. Sometimes this can happen in literal abductions such as the capture of Israeli military personnel, useful both as a trigger for Israeli responses and for subsequent prisoner exchanges or 'liberations' – though Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's general secretary, maintained that the destructive consequences of the summer 2006 confrontation went well beyond what he had anticipated. Sometimes the strategy entails undermining the parties and forces of traditional Arab ruling elites. In Lebanon, this strategy has jeopardised the ability of the national bourgeoisie to sustain and fulfil its goals in attracting foreign investment, stabilising the economy, strengthening governmental authority, resisting outside intervention and advancing political reform and democracy. This further demonstrates that the party has acted as an anti-globalist force using Islamic slogans, even as it might pragmatically cooperate with merchant and middle-class economic interests, as the Iranian leadership did earlier.

Anti-Democratic Thesis: A Non-Government Party-Commanded Welfare Economy

Democratisation in Lebanon, indeed in the region as a whole, has been sabotaged by instability and economic conditions that rendered political and institutional reform irrelevant, if not contradictory to the aspirations of the lower social classes. In fact, Hezbollah's armed struggle against Israel, with the active support of Iran and Syria, has provided a large section of the population with financial support beyond the ability or willingness of the government and of a capitalist-based Lebanese economy to do so (clearly of course much of Iran's resources come from intimately capitalist dealings in the petroleum markets, while Syria continues a search for international trade relations). Not only did that support provide steady income to thousands of Hezbollah fighters who would otherwise have remained unemployed for lack of skills beyond military training, but it also supported a wide network of social services for poor Shi'ite families. Hezbollah has provided monthly pensions to families of 'martyrs' as well as to party veterans and ex-detainees released from Israeli prisons, in addition to socialised programmes such as free schooling and access to hospitalisation for everyone among the faithful in need. Furthermore, the party has been able to mount and conspicuously publicise post-war rebuilding and development programmes throughout the Shi'ite rural areas, undercutting whatever resentment might have existed against its leaders for instigating the hostilities that brought all this on. Neither the government nor a bourgeois capitalist-based economy with a democratic agenda was prepared instantly and efficiently to provide any serious alternative services to this broad section of the population. As a consequence, the Iranian foreign policy that supported Hezbollah's social welfare programmes for the poor in addition to military backing gained wider popular sympathy, in contrast to support for the West which rhetorically supported entrepreneurship and arranged for peace monitoring forces (and an expanded UNIFIL role). Thus, in another hostage strategy, the national bourgeois parties were effectively immobilised, unable to advance an independent agenda without Hezbollah's approval.

During the conflict with Israel and through his many televised addresses to the Lebanese, Arabs and Muslim peoples, Hassan Nasrallah appeared as the de facto president of an 'Islamic Lebanese State'.⁵⁰ Upon his guidance and decision the destiny of the entire country depended, a fact causing consternation among many Lebanese and Arab regional opponents of militant Shi'a Islam.⁵¹

Israel's devastating American-backed military retaliation against Hezbollah in July–August 2006, which led to a widespread destruction of the country's civilian infrastructure and to the additional displacement

of the Shi'ite population from the rural south and the southern suburbs of Beirut, undermined the government's power at the very time it had become a favourite of the West for expelling the Syrians.⁵² Israel's attack further marginalised the bourgeois parties, setting back economic prosperity and increasing the numbers of homeless, displaced and poor in the country and increased the chances of renewed sectarian violence. All of this played into the Hezbollah leadership's hands. Walid Jumbalt, Druze leader and head of Progressive Socialist Party, concluded: 'After 12 July [the start of the Israeli offensive against Hezbollah], Lebanon is now unfortunately being entrenched solidly into the Syrian-Iranian axis.' He went on to add: 'The hopes of a stable, prosperous Lebanon where we could attract investments is [*sic*] over for now. It is a fatal blow for confidence.'⁵³ Confronting an ever-increasing non-government-commanded welfare economy, a *laissez-faire*-based democracy has continued to lack the framework for advancement in the region. Hopes for a strong stable government attracting foreign investment and generating economic prosperity, gradually undermining poverty and politically strengthening the bourgeoisie against radical parties, as envisioned by global perspectives, continue to be sabotaged. With the keen support of regional powers, in particular Iran and Syria, Hezbollah retains the ability to recruit warriors and draw wide-ranging public support to advance its political programme. Thus a growing social-welfare revolutionary-based economy commanded by a single party has emerged in direct competition to the bourgeois state, undermining its political foundations and its ability to achieve global economic integration or advance liberal democracy.

Can Democracy Triumph?

Compared to radical Communist parties of the third world during the Cold War, Hezbollah appears to be a movement equally or more entrenched among the underclass. As demonstrated in this article, Hezbollah, as well as various other Middle Eastern Islamist movements, has emerged as a vanguard of the poor and the dispossessed, battling global policies that strengthen bourgeois governments and strip the poor of their basic social safety nets. Led by politically astute clerics, the party's ability to mobilise militant adherents from poverty-stricken areas and across ethnic divides while implanting a non-government party-commanded welfare economy further aligned Hezbollah as antithetical to economic liberalisation and democratisation.

In the long term such a movement might, given diminished perceived foreign threat entailed in such potential agreements as a Palestinian-Israeli accord, an Israeli-Syrian border agreement, a US-Iranian nuclear deal or a US withdrawal from Iraq, lose some power of appeal. Washington might

regain regional access by abandoning its extreme interventionist orientation and more closely aligning its Middle East policy with that of its European allies such as France and Germany as well as Russia and China; thus forming an actual 'global' approach to the region. Israel might reap greater security by finalising direct peace negotiations with the Palestinians and Syrians, thus de-linking these parties from Iran, which has vowed to abide by agreements the Palestinian and Syrian authorities find acceptable. Yet without addressing the root causes of Islamist socio-economic discontent, which lie in global economic policies that fail to confront the growth of poverty, despair and dispossession in the Middle East, radicalism is unlikely to lose its flame.

The precise linkage between economic development and democracy or civil violence is not entirely clear. Many scholars have noted an 'inverse U' relationship, in which it is the transitional economies that experience the most domestic upheaval and instability.⁵⁴

Thus there are no guarantees that anti-poverty programmes and economic infusion will reduce violence and produce pluralistic democracies, at least in the short term. Yet it appears that the failure to address the needs of the mass underclass significantly undermines such political prospects and at least in the short to middle term empowers militant political organisations, especially if the latter are ingeniously led with a combination of incorruptibility, tactical flexibility and opportunism. The advancement of a global liberal democratic agenda along with political moderation may not be achievable without a global outlook that supports broad and efficient institutionalised social welfare programmes.

As demonstrated in this article, Hezbollah's power is not solely drawn from public anger against perceived American support of Israel, nor is it driven solely by a strict adherence to religious precepts. It is not even entirely based in opposition to Western order and democratisation, or primarily driven by Iranian-Syrian foreign policy. Rather, all these factors combine and constitute political outlets for Hezbollah's fundamental strength rooted in the socio-economic conditions of the underclass, in needs unmet by previous Middle Eastern nationalist movements and regimes. As a US National Intelligence Council report stressed, '[t]he extent to which radical Islam grows and how regimes respond to its pressures will also have long-term repercussions for democratisation and the growth of civil society institutions'.⁵⁵ In this article we have suggested that uprooting Radical Islamist movements and advancing democracy in the Middle East, as called for by the West, remains a political mirage, in stark contrast to the reality of poverty and economic instability, now compounded by war damage in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestinian Territories, Sudan, Somalia and Lebanon. Winning the battle against religious militancy, therefore, needs to be,

crucially, a fight against economic deprivation and political alienation where the central government takes the initiative, supported by the global community, in placing effective social-service programmes for the poor – thus empowering social justice and winning moderation against despair and extremism. Nothing could be more symbolic of the opportunity gap and of missed opportunities for reconciliation, for example, than Israel's demolition of perfectly viable housing, community buildings and infrastructure during its unilateral withdrawal from Gaza.

Ultimately, achieving social and international peace and developing moderation and appropriate forms of democracy can only succeed through a global policy that assists in removing the root cause of social instability and building the size and influence of those class elements that have traditionally supported secular democracy. Military intervention and the fight against terrorism without comprehensive economic development, progress toward cross-border and cross-cultural peace agreements, conspicuous acts of mutual inter-cultural respect and sympathy or political reform reducing authoritarian rule and corruption can only lay the groundwork for the future growth of extremism and revolutionary reaction.

NOTES

1. Masoud Kazemzadeh, 'Teaching the Politics of Islamic Fundamentalism', *Political Science and Politics* 31, no. 1 (1998), pp.52–9.
2. While it is a term better applied to Christian revivalism, there are many definitions of 'Islamic fundamentalism'. For purposes of this article, however, we aim to examine the radical Islamic mobilisations that seek, in different forms and strategies, the eradication of the current traditional or 'moderate' Middle Eastern governments and the expulsion of Western influences. It is from this angle that we look at Islamist movements without ruling out other social, cultural or religious traits.
3. See Martin Marty and Scott Appleby's *Fundamentalism Project* vols. 2–4 (1993–2004), an edited series from the University of Chicago Press.
4. Farhad Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution in Iran: The Migrant Poor, Urban Marginality and Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 1980); Sami Zubaida, *Islam, the People and the State: Political Ideas and Movements in the Middle East* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1993); Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essay on the Islamic Republic* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993); Misav Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996); Adam Webb, 'The Calm Before the Storm? Revolutionary Pressures and Global Governance', *International Political Science Review* 27, no. 1 (2006), pp. 73–92.
5. Eric Watkins, 'The Unfolding US Policy in the Middle East', *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs) 73, no. 1 (1997).
6. Abdesalam Maghraoui, *American Foreign Policy and Islamic Renewal* (Washington: USIP Special Report 164, July 2006).
7. President George W. Bush has described Islamic extremists, terrorists or fundamentalists as 'Fascists' whose defeat cannot be compromised. Also see Stephen Van Evera, 'Assessing U.S. Strategy in the War on Terror', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 607 (2006), pp.10–26.
8. S.V.R. Nasr, 'Democracy and Islamic Revivalism', *Political Science Quarterly* 110, no. 2 (1995), pp.261–85.

9. Somewhat similar divisions were seen in the supposedly 'monolithic' Communist bloc during the Cold War.
10. See G8's resolutions on 'Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa', G8 Information Centre, Sea Island, 9 June 2004.
11. Lal Khan, 'Fundamentalist Resurgence: Causes and Prospects', International Marxist Tendency, 1995, available at <http://www.marxist.com/fundamentalist-resurgence-causes-prospects.htm> [accessed 2006].
12. See Eli Berman, 'Sect, Subsidy, and Sacrifice: An Economist's Views on Ultra-Orthodox Jews', *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 65, no. 3 (2000), pp.905–53; Daniel Chen, 'Economic Distress and Religious Intensity: Evidence from Islamic Resurgence during the Indonesian Financial Crisis', PRESS working paper no. 39, Harvard University, 2003; Christina Paxson, 'Education Poverty, and Terrorism: Is there a causal connection?', comment on Alen Krueger and Jilka Maleckova, mimeo, Princeton University, 2002; Quan Li and Drew Schaub, 'Economic Globalisation and Transnational Terrorist Incidents: A Pooled Time-Series Cross-Sectional Analysis', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 2 (2004), pp.230–58.
13. Laura Tyson, 'It's Time to Step Up the Global War on Poverty', *Business Week*, 3 Dec. 2001; James D. Wolfensohn, 'Fight Terrorism by Ending Poverty', *New Perspectives Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (2002), p.42.
14. Brian Burgoon, 'On Welfare and Terror: Social Welfare Policies and Political-Economic Roots of Terrorism', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 2 (April 2006), pp.176–203.
15. Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970).
16. See the work of Bruce Russett et al., 'The Democratic Peace', *International Security* 19, no 4 (Spring, 1995), pp. 164–184; Brown, Michael E., Steven E. Miller and Sean M. Lynn-Jones, *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996).
17. See draft proposal presented by the American government to its G8 counterparts in early 2004: *Al-Hayat*, 13 Feb. 2004, translated to English by the *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* at <http://www.meib.org/documentfile/040213.htm> [accessed 2006].
18. 'Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa', G8 Information Centre, Sea Island, 9 June 2004.
19. See Nikki Keddie, 'The New Religious Politics: Where, When, and Why Do 'Fundamentalisms' Appear?' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 4 (1998), pp.696–723.
20. National Intelligence Council (NIC), *Global Trends 2010* (Washington, DC: National Intelligence Council, 1997).
21. Keddie, 'The New Religious Politics', p. 721.
22. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel?*; James C. Davies, 'Toward a Theory of Revolution', *American Sociological Review* 27, no. 1 (1962); Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968); Adam Webb, 'The Calm Before the Storm? Revolutionary Pressures and Global Governance', *International Political Science Review* 27, no. 1 (2006), pp.73–92.
23. See also Hilal Khashan, 'The New World Order and the Tempo of Militant Islam', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 24, no. 1 pp. 5–24 (1997).
24. Statistics Lebanon Ltd., June 2006. The question was 'Which political party or group represents your views and reflects your political opinion?' (n = 400)
25. In his various speeches, Hezbollah's Hassan Nassrallah has mocked the 'Lebanon First' policy advocated by the Lebanese bourgeois nationalist parties (particularly the March 14th Alliance) as a political shortsightedness by leaders who think they are living on the moon not on a globalised earth. He called on Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez as a better Lebanese and Arab nationalist leader than many in Lebanon and the Arab world for his proclaimed solidarity with Hezbollah against Israel.
26. Several public opinion polls conducted by Al-Jazeera during July–August 2006 showed overwhelming support for Hezbollah throughout the Middle East, undoubtedly conditioned by its military successes against Israel. See <http://www.aljazeera.net/Portal/vote/?DoSearch=true&Subject=???%20???&SelectSite=000&DaysFrom=31&MonthsFrom=7&YearsFrom=2006&DaysTo=15&MonthsTo=9&YearsTo=2006> [accessed 2006].
27. After Israel's bombardment of the southern district of Beirut during July–August 2006, banners were raised on the ruins of destroyed apartment buildings with slogans such as 'This is the US Sponsored New Middle East!'

28. According to American intelligence indicators, before the Israeli attacks of 2006 the Lebanese unemployment rate was already close to 18%, with 28% of the population below the poverty line. The 28% figure may indeed understate the extent of poverty, as years of war and occupations in southern Lebanon left the majority of southern towns largely dependent on Hezbollah's financial support, without many alternatives other than limited agriculture. Even in the agricultural sector, many in the south engaged in relatively menial pursuits such as harvesting fruit. A national history of political marginalisation and elite family dominance of the country's power centres left the majority of Shi'a relatively politically alienated. Shi'ite businessmen tended to invest out of Shi'a areas, seeking financial stability and higher profit margins. Most investments in Shi'ite regions were small in scale and utilised temporary workers. Most government contracts are politically influenced and controlled by either AMAL or Hezbollah. See the CIA's *World Fact Book*, at <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/le.html#Econ> [accessed 2006].
29. According to a Lebanese public opinion poll conducted by the American University College of Technology with 450 Lebanese participants during January 2006, only 4% prioritised democratic reform for the country while majority (57%) considered security as the single most important national issue, followed by achieving independence and sovereignty (25%) and economic revitalisation (14%): *Al-Balad* (Beirut), 6 March 2006.
30. The Left-Democrats and the Progressive Socialist Party joined the anti-Syrian anti-Hezbollah March 14th Alliance along with various right-wing bourgeois parties.
31. According an Information International opinion survey conducted with a sample of 800 participants in September 2006, following the Hezbollah-Israeli conflict in July–August, 66.3% believed that Israel was conspiring to attack Lebanon while waiting for a pretext to achieve its aim (Information International, Beirut, Sept. 2006). This public perception of a hidden Israeli-American agenda conspiring to control the region has well served the emergence of Hezbollah as the liberator and defender of national rights.
32. 69.1% of respondents surveyed by Information International in September 2006 characterised the United States as being the enemy of Lebanon during the July-August war with Israel.
33. The vast majority of Lebanon's population is reported to be living in mainly urban centres with widespread slums surrounding major cities known as 'belts of misery': see Choghig Kasparian, *La population libanaise et ses caractéristiques* (Beirut: University of Saint Joseph, 2003). The country's current population is estimated at four million (July 2004 est.) in addition to 400,000 Palestinian refugees and close to one million foreign workers, mostly Syrians (see <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html> [accessed 2007]).
34. See Mona Harb and Reinoud Leenders, 'Know Thy Enemy: Hizbullah, "Terrorism" and the Politics of Perception', *Third World Quarterly* 26 (2005).
35. See Marina Ottaway, 'Democracy and Constituencies in the Arab World', Carnegie Papers, Democracy and the Rule of Law Project, Middle East series, No. 48 (July 2004).
36. The 1968 Cairo Agreement between the PLO and the Lebanese government limited government authority over refugee camps and legitimised the military presence of the PLO in them.
37. Average annual Palestinian refugee income is US\$3,633 in Lebanon with unemployment rate of 17.1% (1999 est.) and US\$1,000 average annual income with unemployment rate of 15.6% in Syria (2000 est.). 60% of Palestinian refugee households in Lebanon are reported to live below poverty level (2001 est.). See Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Palestine*, no. 2 (2001).
38. Since 1992 Hezbollah has organised public protests against the Hariri-led government, often clashing with police. The pattern of public protests, however, gained greater intensity following the Syrian pullout from Lebanon and the emergence of an anti-Syrian parliamentary majority and cabinet in May 2005.
39. It is remarkable, for example, that as reported in Western media, during the Israeli bombing campaign, tourist and resort hotels in south and central Beirut continued to operate with a clientele seemingly remote from the unfolding events.
40. Hezbollah's 'Loyalty to Resistance' bloc won 15 parliamentary seats during the May 2005 election out of a total of 128 and helped secure its co-sectarian Shi'ite ally Amal Movement's 'Resistance and Development' bloc an additional 15 seats. Together they held five crucial

cabinet ministries out of 24, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html> [accessed 2007]).

41. Among those supported by Hezbollah against the March 14th Alliance were: Salim Al-Houss and Omar Karami, Sunni leaders against Hariri's Future bloc; We'am Wahab and Talal Erslan, Druze leaders against Walid Jumblat and his Progressive Socialist Party; Souleiman Franjeyah and Michel Aoun, Maronite leaders against various other groups such as Lebanese Forces, Phalanges and Ahrar groups.
42. In a Statistics Lebanon and International Republican Institute national public opinion survey, conducted in July 2006 and covering 2,400 Lebanese citizens, support for Hezbollah appeared to cross regions and sects. When asked 'What political party best represents you in Parliament?' respondents who choose Hezbollah, among other political parties, were distributed geographically as follows: 24.5% from Mount Lebanon District, 21.6% from the Northern District, 26.1% from the South, and 24.8% from Bequaa Valley. The respondents were distributed according to their religious sect as 15.4% Christians, 27.8% Sunni, 50.7% Shiite, and 6.2% Druze (Beirut: Statistics Lebanon Ltd, July, 2006).
43. According to Al-Jazeera's news poll conducted between 17 and 20 August 2006, more than 85% of respondents considered that disarming Hezbollah should not be a Lebanese national priority. Al-Jazeera News Network, <http://www.aljazeera.net/Portal/vote/?DoSearch=true&Subject=???%20???&SelectSite=000&DaysFrom=31&MonthsFrom=7&YearsFrom=2006&DaysTo=15&MonthsTo=9&YearsTo=2006> [accessed 2006].
44. Tens of thousands of Hezbollah supporters took to the streets against the government throughout 2006 under various pretexts. In May, massive anti-government labour union demonstrations led by Hezbollah brought down government economic recovery plans; in June, Hezbollah supporters blocked streets in protest against a local TV comedy show critical of Hassan Nassrallah; in September close to one million supporters rallied in celebration of a claimed Hezbollah victory against Israel, but celebration was soon turned into a demonstration critical of government policies. Attacks in Iraq against Shi'ite shrines quickly drew massive street mobilisations critical of the Lebanese government. Events in the Palestinian territories also had similar outcomes, with Hezbollah blockading major roads and highways with checkpoints demanding financial and political support for Palestinians while loudspeakers played revolutionary songs in a direct challenge to the Lebanese central authority. Finally, after the resignation of its ministers and allies from the cabinet in November 2006, Hezbollah succeeded in brining the entire country to a halt with hundreds of thousands of supporters massing in the streets of Beirut demanding the departure of the perceived American-sponsored government of Prime Minister Fouad Saniora.
45. Hezbollah is believed to receive annually over US\$100 million from Iran as well as weapons and logistic support from Syria to assist its various activities in Lebanon.
46. The *ummah* refers to 'Islamic and Arab' nations or communities of believers. Hezbollah, through Hassan Nassrallah's televised interviews and addresses, has stressed this notion to remain inclusive of non-Muslim communities and refrained from using exclusivist rhetoric often adopted by other Islamist extremists such as 'Jihad' and 'anti-crusaders' slogans.
47. The Saudi Arabian, Egyptian and Jordanian governments initially were critical of Hezbollah's armed presence and actions against Israel, but had to back off such criticism as war atrocities emerged and Hezbollah's appeal swelled regionally.
48. Former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was assassinated in a massive car bomb explosion on 14 February 2005. Hariri was a prominent wealthy Lebanese Sunni leader who established close linkages with former French President Jaque Chirac and the Saudi ruling family. He gained significant international and domestic backing that worried the Syrian regime. The United Nations Security Council passed various resolutions sponsoring an international tribunal on Hariri's assassination.
49. After Hezbollah's July–August 2006 military confrontation with Israel, which coincided with the escalation of US pressure against Iran's alleged military-aimed nuclear programme, the party gained strategic regional importance. It demonstrated an ability to initiate crucial tactical attacks against Israel whenever called for by a regional confrontation, particularly in a likely scenario of an Israeli-Palestinian, Israeli-Iranian or American-Iranian military conflict. On another front, the party displayed the ability to lead domestic Lebanese political battles in favour of Syria's strategic advantage vis-à-vis Israel and the West. This further strengthened the centrality of the party within the 'anti-imperialist' regional alliance.

50. 69.3% of 800 Lebanese respondents who were surveyed by Information International in September 2006 said that they had followed in great detail the televised addresses of Hezbollah's general secretary Hassan Nassrallah throughout the war with Israel; 24.5% said they followed them occasionally, and only 6.2% said they were not interested.
51. Hezbollah's stance in the Lebanese army's siege of radical Palestinian Islamists in Nahr Al-Bared Refugee Camp in May 2007 was slow to develop and represented something of an enigma in determining the degree of radical solidarity in Lebanese/Palestinian Islamist movements.
52. Close to one million Lebanese or approximately one-third of the Lebanese population, mostly Shi'ites, were displaced as a consequence of Israel's attacks on Lebanon in July–August 2006. Entire villages and suburbs were reduced to rubble, the civilian infrastructure was severely destroyed and hundreds were killed and injured. Even with the international airport's reopening and villagers' return home on cratered roads, the consequent economic devastation and dislocation is alarming the country with massive unemployment, economic stagnation and poverty, particularly among the Shi'ites.
53. 'Fighting "has sunk hope of a free Lebanon"', *Financial Times* (London), 1 Aug. 2006. Jumblat is also a leader of the March 14th Alliance.
54. See Demet Yalcin Mousseau, 'Democratizing with Ethnic Divisions: A Source of Conflict?' *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 5 (2001), pp.547–67.
55. National Intelligence Council, *Mapping the Global Future: Report of the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project* (Washington, DC: National Intelligence Council, 2004).