# IDENTITY BUILDING: INSIGHTS INTO THE RISE OF POLITICAL SHIISM IN LEBANON

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# IDENTITY BUILDING: INSIGHTS INTO THE RISE OF POLITICAL SHIISM IN LEBANON

## ABSTRACT

### By

### CHERINE ABOU ANTOUN

The purpose of this research is to study Shiites' rise to power in Lebanon and ensuing evolution of their political identity in a constructivist perspective, assessing the contributions of material and normative structures to identity, and on the role of identity and interests in the rise to power of Shiites.

Both primary and secondary sources were utilized to collect data on Shiite identity and rise to power. The primary sources consist of three in-depth interviews with intellectuals, researchers, academics and political figures who have researched the "Shiite issue" in Lebanon. The secondary sources consist of books, journal articles, manuscripts, speeches, documents and statements produced by Amal and Hezbollah.

Three combined approaches are used in this study: analyzing the content, historical analysis and comparative analysis. The analysis of the content will occur through the study of the five key documents that would indicate the Shiite rise to power via the Taif agreement and the Doha agreement as well as the evolution of their political identity via the Founding Document of *Harakat al Mahrumin*, the 1985 Hezbollah Open Letter and the 2009 Hezbollah Political Manifesto.

Through using a constructivist approach to analyze the Shiite rise to political power, the research comes to the conclusion that the formation of identity was a primordial driver in the Shiite ascension to the highest echelons of the Lebanese power ladder. Through two main political parties, the Shiite community developed a core identity that explains its vision of the Lebanese state, its role in decision-making process, its relationship with Syria and Iran, and its perception of *Jihad* against Israel. "Shiite identity" and the institutionalization of this identity has facilitated Shiite advent to power.

To Lebanon, a lost identity

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# Contents

# Chapter 1

# Introduction

"No culture can live, if it attempts to be exclusive" (Gandhi), and no multi-sectarian country can survive if one of its groups attempts to deny the others. Lebanese modern history witnessed the consecutive rule of the Maronites and Sunni communities, with little room for Shiites to participate in governance. It took a civil war that lasted for more than fifteen years to re-adjust the Lebanese political system in favor of a community marginalized since the inception of modern Lebanon: the Shiites.

The Shiite first organized but shy political action in Lebanon took place in Jabal Amil in a meeting at *Wadi el Hujayr* on the 24th of April 1920 to oppose French colonialism in Lebanon. "This meeting authorized Sayed Abdul Hussein Sharaffedine, Sayed Muhsen Al-Amine and Sayed Abdul Hussein Noureddine to discuss the future of Jabal Amil with King Faysal in Damascus."[1]

Later events would doom the Shiites from taking part effectively in the newly created Lebanese Republic as they remained at the margin of effective political representation.

Efforts to enhance Shiite identity and representation in Lebanon were complemented by the advent of an Imam who arrived to Lebanon in 1959 as the new *marja* (religious reference) of Tyre's Shiite community, not knowing precisely what he was going to trigger nor whether he had chosen Lebanon or whether the Lebanese Shiites had chosen him.

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[1] Noor Al-Islam Organization, "Jabal Amil the cradle of knowledge and the land of freedom", http://www.nooralislam.org/last/7172/pdf7172/nor1.pdf.

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The outbreak k of the Lebanese civil war in 1975, the sudden disappearance of Imam Mousa Sadr in 1978, the Iranian revolution in 1979, the frustrations of the Shiite community from the corrupted Amal Movement and the succession of Israeli military campaigns culminating in the 1982 invasion of Lebanon presented a fertile ground for the creation of a radical Islamic party: Hezbollah.

Even though Shiites were not (formally) active participants in the executive power until the 2005 Hariri assassination – an assassination that redrew balances of power on the internal and regional scenes, Hezbollah managed to establish a strong hold in the Shiite arena.

It took the Shiites bloody confrontations and many years to adopt a dominant political discourse that would galvanize their identity and political representation in a country that has not yet mourned the civil war, in a nation where confession is the foremost identity, and in a region where religion and conflict are so bluntly intertwined and real.

## 1.1    Objective of the Research

Shiites in Lebanon have moved within half a century from marginalization to political participation rendering them one of the most influential and organized sectarian group in the Lebanese political arena. This thesis is dedicated to the study of the Shiites rise to power in Lebanon and ensuing evolution of their political identity. In the context of this research, the expression "rise to power", refers to the political gains obtained and accumulated by the Shiites as compared to other Lebanese sects. Furthermore, the term "political identity" encompasses the aspects of resistance, Islam, and the relationship with the Lebanese State.

The interests in producing this research are demographic and economic trends that put the Shiite community at the heart of the Lebanese decision-making process for the first time since the inception of Greater Lebanon. Shiites make up "38%"[2] of the Lebanese population, a high percentage in a multi-sectarian country home for 18 sects. Their economic situation has been progressing due to their Diaspora's remittances, a Diaspora spread mainly all over Europe, Africa, US and the Gulf Arab countries and due to the Iranian financial support.

In spite of constituting only "approximately 10 to 15 percent of all Muslims"[3], in the world, Shiites became a regional and international actor mainly due to the emergence of the Iranian Republic in 1978 and to their resistance activities against Israel.

## 1.2    Literature Review

Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi in *International Relations Theory, Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond* conduct an in-depth study of the major theories of international relations namely realism, pluralism and globalism, while also exposing the fundamentals of constructivism

Scott Burchill. Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnelly, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit and Jacqui True in *Theories of International Relations provide* a comprehensive study of international relations theories and a guide to leading theoretical perspectives mainly realism, liberalism, marxism, postmodernism, feminism, and most importantly constructivism.

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[2] About.com: Middle East Issues, "The difference between Sunnis and Shiites", http://middleeast.about.com/od/religionsectarianism/a/me070907sunnis.htm.
[3] Ibid.

David Boucher in *Theories of International Relations: From Thucydides to the Present* investigates into empiricism focusing on Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes and the universal moral order. The author emphasizes law and morality, causes and conduct of war as well as Locke and Kant's works. The book also exposes the importance of identity and the contributions of Rousseau, Burke, Hegel and Marx to international relations.

Alexander Wendt in *Social Theory of International Politics* studies social theory and international politics exposing constructivism and the importance of power, interest, norms, structures and culture along with processes and structural change.

Robert Keohane in *Neo realism and its Critics* departs from realism and from Keneth Waltz's perceptions on laws, theories, political structures and balances of power to advocate a neo realist theory that adjusts the realist state centric and rationality assumptions to advocate the importance of non state actors in the conduct of international relations.

Information collected from the all the aforementioned books served the thesis' theoretical framework and mainly the study of constructivism as an approach to understand the Shiites rise to power in Lebanon.

Sor-Hoon Tan, the editor of *Challenging Citizenship, Group Membership and Cultural Identity in a Global Age* emphasizes globalization and citizenship, stressing the link between migration and cultural diversity, the concept of a global citizen and, the contributions of liberalism to identity. The book assess the importance of identity in the study of international relations and contributes to the understanding of the different aspects of the Shiite identity

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Roschanack Shaery- Eisenlohr in *Shiite Lebanon Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities* exposes the making of national identities in Lebanon and especially the Shiite one through the emphasis on the importance of schooling in the creation of a Shiite public identity, and on the importance of Shiite piety and Iranian cultural politics in Lebanon in the Shiite identity making process.

Fouad Ajami dedicates *The Vanished Imam: Mousa Sadr and the Shiite of Lebanon* to the study of Mousa Sadr, shedding light on his life, his relation with and contributions to the Shiite community, his reinterpretation of Shiism and his legacy.

Augustus Richard Norton in *Amal and the Shiite: the Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* tackles the change in the Shiite community with the advent of Mousa Sadr, their consequent political mobilization, the creation of the Amal movement criticizing the discrepancy in the latter's political speech and actions.

Majid Al Halawi in *A Lebanon Defied: Mousa Sadr and the Shiite Community* dwells on the Shiites in Lebanon. The author focuses on the underdevelopment and deprivation their community witnessed to the birth of a Shiite Diaspora and bourgeoisie. He also assesses Sadr as a leader, and *Harakat al Mahrumin* (Movement of the Deprived) and later on Amal as movements.

Michael Axworthy in *A history of Iran: Empire of the Mind* elaborates on Iranian history since the Parthian and Sassanid, going through the Safavid, the Pahlavi monarchy, the revolution and the consequent Iranian Republic until the rule of the current Iranian president Ahmadinejad.

John L. Esposito editor of *The Iranian Revolution: its Global Impact* studies the Iranian revolution and Khomeini's effort to export his revolution to the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

Naim Qassem's *Hezbollah the Story from Within* is a comprehensive study on Hezbollah's key milestones, visions goals, public work, political participation, stance vis a vis the Palestinian cause and its regional and international relations.

Augustus Richard Norton in *Hezbollah* tackles the rise of the Shiite in the pre Hezbollah era mainly the role of Mousa Sadr and Amal, the founding of Hezbollah in 1892, the importance of *Ashura* as a ritual and identity for a Shiite in the 21st century. Furthermore the book elaborates on the party's participation in politics, and the developments Hezbollah undertook from the 2000 liberation to the 2006 July war.

## 1.3    Research Problem

After many readings on the topic and after an extensive analysis of the existing literature, the thesis notes that the rise of the Shiites to political power in Lebanon and the accompanying changes in identity were never studied from a constructivist perspective emphasizing "the importance of normative as well as material structures, on the role of identity in shaping political action and on the mutually constitutive relationship between agents and structures."[4] Neither the realist nor the pluralist school deal with the importance of material and normative structures along with the role of identity in rise to power. The thesis studies how constructivism could be applied to the present case at hand. Neither the realist nor the pluralist school deal with the importance of material and normative structures Hence, this thesis aims to provide a new perspective on the Shiite rise to political power in Lebanon, and the relationship of this rise to progressing political identity and the institutionalization of

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[4] Scott Burchill et al., *Theories of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 188.

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the "Shiite identity" through the set of educational, health and other institutions that empowered the new identity and converted it to actual political power translated through the laws and institutions of the Lebanese Government. A few variables have to be defined before further analysis:

- By Shiites, this thesis specifically refers to the two major Shiite parties, Amal and Hezbollah, both of which have monopolized and summarized Shiite representation in government for the past twenty years. Although Shiite political history is full of examples of "local *za'ims*/leaders" such as the families of Assad, Khalil, El-Zein, Sharafeddine, etc and of prominent intellectual spiritual leaders/*Sheikh* such as Hani Fahs and Mohamad Hussein Fadlallah , the thesis focuses on institutionalized power measured through political party action. Hence, by the rise of the Shiites to power, this thesis specifically studies the ascension of Hezbollah and Amal to political power and accompanying crystallization of Shiite identity. The thesis is not trying to establish a causal link between the crystallization of the Shiite identity and their rise to power.

- By rise to power is meant the increased presence and impact of Shiite parties within the decision-making mechanisms of Lebanese constitutional institutions, namely the Parliament and the Council of Ministers. Hence, the rise to power is to be studied through analyzing constitutional texts as well as pacts that would have the same effect as constitutional arrangements (such as the 2008 Doha Agreement for example). The latter is not a constitutional amendment. Yet, since its ratification by all Lebanese parties, it became the norm to form Cabinets.

- By political identity is meant the major elements/components of Shiite political thought. Through studying the political identity of the Shiites, the thesis analyses the evolution of Shiite political thought for the past 30 years, and the main elements/components that have formed the main pillars of that thought/identity. Such thought is studied in this thesis through analyzing the content of critical documents by Amal and Hezbollah that tackled their vision of Islam, *Jihad* (holy war), the relationship with Lebanese Government, Syria and Iran.

## 1.4    Research Methodology

To track the evolution of the Shiite identity, the thesis uses three major documents/sources that are reflective of the Shiite political state of mind through its historical evolution. The first of these sources is the Founding Document of *Harakat al Mahrumin* which sets the guidelines for the Shiites' first steps and political action in Lebanon. The second document is the 1985 Hezbollah Open Letter which came as a shock to other Lebanese sects as well as to Mousa Sadr's plans for Lebanese Shiites. The last document referred to in this research is the 2009 Hezbollah "Political Manifesto"; a statement that lays down Hezbollah's recent vision of Lebanese political life and the role of the Shiite community in such life.

To track the ascendance of Shiites to political power, the thesis analyses the contents of the pre-Taif Constitution, the Taif Agreement, and the Doha Accord. It is claimed that the three documents are critical in charting the evolution of Shiite power in the Lebanese political system.

Three combined approaches are used in this study: analyzing the content, historical analysis and comparative analysis. The analysis of the content will occur through the study of the five key documents that would indicate the Shiite rise to power via the Taif Agreement and the Doha Agreement as well as the evolution of their political identity via the founding document of *Harakat al Mahrumin*, the 1985 Hezbollah Open Letter and the 2009 Hezbollah Political Manifesto.

Analysis of the above-mentioned documents will take into account the historical evolution of Shiite thought through charting the evolution of that thought in relationship to critical political phases that Lebanon has gone through in the past 30 years. The historical analysis of the content of documents is carried out in a comparative way that enables the comparison of different documents along fixed criteria such as: Islam, resistance, vision of Lebanese state, relationship with Iran and Syria, power of the Shiite Speaker of the House (Head of Parliament).

To collect data on the topic, the thesis relies on secondary sources, mainly books, journal articles, manuscripts, speeches, and documents and statements produced by Amal and Hezbollah.

Primary sources of information to be used mainly consist of interviews with intellectuals, researchers and academics who have researched the "Shiite issue" in Lebanon. The interviewees are: Dr. Jihad Banout of Amal Movement, Mr. Mohamad Nassrallah of Amal Movement, Dr. Wajih Kanso professor at the Lebanese University. Due to security reasons, interviews with members of Hezbollah were not possible.

## 1.5    Structure

The thesis is composed of six chapters. Chapter one introduces the subject, conducts literature review, states the research problem, explains the methodology of research and indicates the division of chapters within the thesis.

Chapter two is dedicated to the theoretical study of constructivism, asserting the need of a constructivist approach to the study of the Shiite rise to power in Lebanon. Identities play a crucial role in shaping political action and little work has been undertaken to understand the role of identity as the basis for interests in the multi-ethnic Lebanese context in which identity and fear of the other are the main drivers of internal, regional and international politics.

Chapter three exposes and studies Shiite sectarian awareness, and their shy but steady political evolution in terms of the different balances of power games. Moreover, this section briefly depicts the Lebanese civil war, a war placed under the aegis of sectarianism. Sectarianism, a main driver of Lebanese identity has accompanied Lebanese sects since the time they were Ottoman subjects. It is also a main driving force of the different balances of power that have been taking place since the creation of Greater Lebanon going through the 1943 national pact, and the civil war up until our days.

Chapter four sheds light over the contributions of Sayid Mousa Sadr and later of Amal on the Shiite identity and rise to power through the analysis of the content of the Founding Document of *Harakat al Mahrumin*.

Chapter five analyzes the contributions of Hezbollah to Shiite identity. Created in 1982 as a reaction to the 1979 Iranian revolution, Hezbollah gained ground quickly within both the Shiites and the Lebanese scenes. The party's strong and

cohesive internal organization along with its religious ideology advancing the importance of Shiism and of the *Wilayat al Faqih* (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurists) on the Lebanese political front appealed to many Shiites subjects. The party's contributions to Shiite identity and rise to power in Lebanon is studied through the analysis of the content of the 1985 Open Letter and the 2009 Political Manifesto.

Chapter six, analyzes the Shiite rise to power as reflected in the evolution of pacts and constitutional revisions in Lebanon and concludes with an examination of the crystallization of Shiite identity. Mainly a comparative reading is conducted on the content of the National Pact (1943), Lebanese Constitution , Taif Agreement (1989), and Doha Agreement (2008). The chapter tries to observe the political gains that the Shiite community has accumulated over the past 60 years because of economic, social, and demographic, as well as, significant changes in the regional environment specifically pertaining to the Arab Israeli conflict and the rise of Political Shiism as the major resistance movement to Israel in the region.

Chapter seven, the conclusion, analyses some the limitations of the constructivist school applied on the Lebanese case and recapitulates the contributions of constructivism to the study of Shiite rise to power in Lebanon. In half a century, Shiites succeeded in becoming the most organized political Lebanese phenomenon in a country of lost identity, where religion is a tool constantly used and abused for political ends, where fear of the other is a constant apprehension and where all means sound plausible for survival.

# Chapter II

# Constructivism and the power identity

## 2.1    Introduction

A theoretical study of constructivism, asserting the need of a constructivist approach to the study of the Shiite rise to power in Lebanon is of significance at this point. Identities play a crucial role in shaping political action and little work has been undertaken to understand the role of identity as the basis for interests in the multi-ethnic Lebanese context in which identity and fear of the other are the main drivers of internal, regional and international politics.

## 2.2    Definition of a Theory

A theory is defined as "an intellectual construct which helps one to select facts and interpret them in such a way as to facilitate explanation and prediction concerning regularities and recurrences or repetitions of observed phenomena."[5] Theories are very useful in the analysis of international relations as they guide and shape one's interpretation of events. Schools of international relations are general perspectives under which theories operate.

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[5]Mark Kauppi and Paul Viotti, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond* (Massachusetts: Viacom Company, 1999), 3.

## 2.3    A Glimpse of Realism and Pluralism

At the end of World War II and throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century realism became the leading theory of international relations. The perception of the human as evil capable of all vices and of the state as a self interested entity - engaged in a continual battle for survival - dominated interactions and power relations between different states on the regional and the international spheres.

The emergence of the US as the only super power at the end of the Cold War, the nuclear threat, the rapid technological developments, the increasing economic interdependence and the introduction of the clash of civilizations by Samuel Huntington added to the diversity and complexity of the international relations' field. "International relations was not to be conceived as a system of colliding billiard balls but as a cobweb of political, economic and social relations binding sub national, national, transnational, international and supra national actors"[6] and identities. The pluralist inside out approach to understanding international relations gained more ground in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by arguing the important contributions of individuals, groups, organizations... to regional and international politics.

The failure of realist and pluralist academics to predict and understand the unipolar system that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union along with the emergence of a new generation scholars, affected the debate between the two prominent schools of thought and provoked the ascendancy of the new constructivist school. A school which adopted a critical approach to the understanding of international relations.[7]

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[6] Scott Burchill et al., *Theories of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 189.
[7] Ibid., 195.

Constructivism appealed to Middle Eastern scholars who grant identity a central role when studying the region [8]; Lebanon is not an exception. Its recent history has been one of struggle and coexistence between different religions and one of interactions based on identity, fear of the other and fear of extinction. Applying constructivism in the Lebanese case helps one better understand the power relations between the different components and the rise to power of each component and most particularly the Shiites. Hence there is a need at this point to expose the constructivist theory, its application to Lebanon along with understanding its limitations as an explanatory tool.

## 2.4    Constructivism

### 2.4.1    Definition

"Constructivism is characterized by an emphasis on the importance of normative as well as material structures, on the role of identity in shaping political action and on the mutually constitutive relationship between agents and structures."[9] Normative and material structures affect the agent's perception, behavior and actions. Actually they contribute to the agent's identity building process. Norms define the meaning and identity of the actor. Interactions between people lead to the creation of social structures which in turn affect identities and interests.

Structures are given a significant importance by constructivists as they participate in the constitution of the self and in the perception of the other.

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[8] Louise Fawcett, ed., *International Relations of the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 151.
[9] Scott Burchill et al., *Theories of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 188.

Constructivism goes into understanding interest formation through the study of individuals' and states' social identities. "In Alexander Wendt's words identities are the basis of interests."[10] Identities condition interests and in turn actions.[11]

To add up to the importance of normative and ideational structures in shaping the political actors' social identities and after fully exposing constructivist arguments in *Theories of International Relations*, Christian Reus Smit sums up by affirming that "institutionalized norms and ideas define the meaning and identity of the individual actor and the patterns of appropriate economic, political, and cultural activity engaged in by those individuals and it is through reciprocal interaction that we create and instantiate enduring social structures in terms of which we define our identities and interests."[12]

The individual is exposed to different interactions that may create different social structures that in turn define identities and interests. One's perception of the self and of the others depends mainly on the situation or context in which the interaction is taking place and on the existing norms that organize societies which generate as an outcome of the interactions in concern. Accordingly, the other is perceived as a friend or a foe and in turn one's behavior and interests will vary.

According to constructivism there are three mechanisms through which structures shape identities and interests. Those are imagination, communication and constraint.

When it comes to imagination, constructivists argue that "non-material structures affect what actors see as the realm of possibility."[13] Non-material structures or norms affect the actor's actions. They also influence the actor's "perceived

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[10] Ibid., 197.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 197-198.
[13] Ibid., 198.

limitations"[14] and strategies in achieving his or her objectives. Perception and imagination largely influence actions and approaches.

Understanding the contributions of communication to identity and interest shaping requires understanding how actors refer to established legitimate norms to justify their behaviors.

"Finally even if normative and ideational structures do not affect an actor's behavior by fragmenting their imagination or by providing a linguistic or moral court appeal, constructivists argue that they can place significant constraints on the actor's conduct"[15]. By stating the above constructivists assert that norms enjoy a binding moral force that shapes the actor's behavior/actions. What constructivism fails to address at this point is that individuals may and have abused norms to justify some of their actions.

## 2.4.2  Types of Constructivism

There are three different types of constructivism: systemic, unit-level and holistic. The systemic school mainly focuses on states' interactions on the international arena ignoring what is happening within the state and how what is occurring domestically is affecting the state's behavior and approach to other states. Wendt believes as other constructivists do that "the identity of the state informs its interests, and, in turn, its actions."[16] He goes on to distinguish between social and corporate identities; "the former referring to the status, role or responsibility that international society ascribes to a state; the latter referring to the internal human,

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., 199.

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material ideological, or cultural factors that make a state what it is."[17] By emphasizing social identities at the expense of corporate ones, Wendt is ignoring the importance of ideational and normative structures/forces.

Unlike Wendt, unit-level constructivists shed more light on corporate identities by concentrating on the link between domestic norms/interstate factors and "the states' interests and identities." [18]

Holistic Constructivism bridges the gap between the two previously discussed constructivist forms; "concerned primarily with the dynamics of global change – particularly the rise and possible demise of the sovereign state - holistic constructivists focus on the mutually constitutive relationship between this order and the state."[19] By bridging systemic and unit-level constructivism, the holistic school's strength lies in its ability to "explain the development of the normative and ideational structures of the present international system, as well as the social identities they have engendered."[20]

### 2.4.3   Constructivism and Lebanon

Holistic constructivism is the best for understanding the Shiites' rise to power in Lebanon and their identity formation through both endogenous structures - internal to the Lebanese state – and through the changes in the regional and international dynamics. It takes into consideration Shiites identity formation within the Lebanese political realm and Shiites' reaction to the Khomeini revolution and the consecutive Iranian power and regional aspirations.

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., 200.
[19] Ibid., 201.
[20] Ibid.

The rise of constructivism largely impacted the international relations' field as the constructivist explanation of world politics and of history through the use of concepts as identity, interest, culture, norms added value to the understanding of international relations. It was time for international relations not to be solely viewed as balances of power between different states with the only aim being survival in an anarchical world, and it was time for state interests not to be solely perceived as essentially material.

The focus on the importance of the power of ideas, norms and values in world politics, and the importance of the construction process of identity and on how identity conditions the behavior of actors greatly impacted the understanding of world politics and of internal state affairs many of in multi-ethnic societies and in states that are far from being nation states such as those in the Middle East.

## 2.5    Different Theoretical Identities and the Case of the Shiites

Shiites in Lebanon are often considered non-state actors trying to influence the Lebanese system in their favor. Their relationship with other components of the Lebanese society is one of a balance of power. Even though both the pluralist and the realist schools can explain the current status of the Shiites in the Lebanese system, none of both schools can help observers understand the Shiites' identity and power building trajectory. Constructivism in this context comes at interplay in the understanding of how Shiites reached their current status on the Lebanese internal scene.

Rising to power in a multi-ethnic society as the Lebanese one is not easy. The process of constructing a meaning for the self and for one's continuity is a process of

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creating one's identity and differentiating it from the other. Shiites as other different Lebanese groups have been managing to respect and abuse the societal and structural norms that govern the interactions between the different Lebanese components whenever they perceive their interests are at stake and whenever they perceive their identity is in danger.

A case in point are May 2008 events[21] that showed that Hezbollah and Amal were ready to endanger the fragile state system in Lebanon and to challenge the state's authority when they felt that they were in danger, when they perceived the other as a foe and when they felt that they needed to ascertain their identity at the expense of others. The focus constructivism grants to the role of identity in shaping political actions gives credit to the need of understanding and studying the research topic through constructivists lenses.

As asserted previously, constructivism advocates the importance of identity in political action, an action translated in both intra and inter state levels The following theoretical study tackles the importance of identity within the state arena.

In his book entitled *Social Theories of International Politics*, Wendt (1999) defines identity as "a property of international actors that generates motivational and behavioral dispositions"[22]. He goes on to argue that "identity is at base a subjective or unit-level quality rooted in actor's self understandings. However the meanings of those understandings will often depend on whether other actors represent an actor in the same way, and to that extent identity will also have an inter subjective or systemic

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[21] May 2008, witnessed the incursion of Hezbollah into Sunni Moslem dominated "West" Beirut along with street confrontations. The conflict ended with the Doha agreement.
[22] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, Eng. : Cambridge University Press, 1999), 224.

quality."[23] So both endogenous and exogenous structures participate in the construction of identities.

Wendt exposes four kinds of identities: personal or corporate, type, role and collective.

"Personal identities are constituted by the self organizing, homeostatic structures that make actors distinct entities."[24] Self- consciousness, unlike interaction with the others, affect the constitution of this type of identities.

"Type identities refer to a social category or label applied to persons who share (or are thought to share) some characteristics, in appearance, behavioral traits, attitudes, values, skills (e.g. language), knowledge, opinions, experience, historical commonalities (like region or place of birth)"[25] and religion. When defining type identities, Wendt gives importance to concepts as membership and culture, attributing hence a importance to "intrinsic properties"[26] and social meaning to identity.

"Role identities exist only in relation to others."[27] Unlike personal/corporate identities which are exogenous to others, role identities are how one perceives himself or herself in the eyes of others. This type of identity is usually constructed upon interaction with the other.

Finally collective identity is when the self identifies itself with the other expanding his or her boundaries to include the other. The perception of the self becomes more important when compared to the other.

Even though one has various identities, they are selected/triggered based on situational factors. Some identities are primary and others are not. Shiites' identity as Shiites is fundamental and their identity as Lebanese is secondary.

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[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., 224-225.
[25] Ibid., 225.
[26] Ibid., 227.
[27] Ibid.

Taking identity further, Wendt links identities to interests by affirming that "identities refer to who or what actors are"[28] and that "interests refer to what actors want"[29] hence, "without interests identities have no motivational force, without identities interests have no direction."[30]

Furthermore Wendt studies the impact of anarchy on the social construction of power politics by arguing that anarchy triggers self help. Accordingly anarchy – a realist concept par excellence – influences interactions within society and hence the identity creation process.

"Competitive and egoistic identities are caused by such an insecurity, if the other is threatening, the self is forced to mirror such behavior in the conception of the self relationship to that other."[31] The process of constructing and reconstructing the self is mainly influenced by security/insecurity, the intensity of interaction and the context the interaction is occurring in.

Most of Shiites' identity building and formation in Lebanon occurred prior to and during the Lebanese civil war. The situation of anarchy that reigned at the time along with the total absence of a central authority played a major role in the building of a competitive and egoistic Shiite identity.

Throughout his discussions, Wendt exposes the predator argument which consists of the states' predisposition to hostility due to numerous causes. In anarchy of many and "if predation occurs right after the first encounter in the state of nature, it will force others with whom it comes in contact to defend themselves if they come to perceive a common threat."[32] What Wendt fails to address in his predator argument is

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[28] Ibid., 230.
[29] Ibid., 231.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Mark Kauppi and Paul Viotti, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond* (Massachusetts: Viacom Company, 1999), 442.
[32] Ibid., 443.

that individuals too adopt an aggressive behavior for the same mentioned above reasons, A case in point are the May 2008 events and the Lebanese civil war.

The threat of March 14 revolution - which was the culmination of a chain of demonstrations after the assassination of late Prime Minister Rafic El Hariri in February 2005 - and of the unknown new identity that was being created and adopted by most of the Lebanese components, left Shiites with no other choice but to defend themselves and their identity individually and to preemptively react by demonstrating on the 8th of March. Two years later, they decided to join forces with the Free Patriotic Movement. The Memorandum of Understanding which occurred between the two parties redefined interactions between the different political components and proved – intentionally or unintentionally – how identities are linked to interests.[33]

In the eighth chapter of "Challenging citizenship Group Membership and Cultural Identity in a Global Age" Alan Montefiore argues that "all individual identities are at least part of (and whether the individual in question likes it or not) necessary functions of the communities to which the individuals in question may properly be held to belong and of the roles which they may be thought to occupy in virtue of their community membership."[34]

Intra and inter-community relations are crucial factors in identity building. Being a Shiite in Lebanon in 1943 is different from being a Shiite in Lebanon at the onset of the 21$^{st}$ century. Considered from an intra-community perspective Shiites' managed to create a particular need for every single individual. Additionally, they managed to create an important Shiite identity rendering its components proud of

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[33] 14 March is a coalition of the Future Movement, the Progressive Socialist Party, the Lebanese Forces, the Phalanges (*Kataeb*) and others, and that the 8 March Movement is a coalition between Hezbollah, Amal, the Communist Party, El Marada Party and others. The Free Patriotic Movement majorly active during the 2005 March 14 revolution, left the coalition later.
[34] Sor-Hoon Tan, ed., *Challenging Citizenship : Group Membership and Cultural Identity in a Global Age* (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 99.

being Shiites more than of being Lebanese. In 50 years, Shiite identity constructed itself and moved from the feeling of non–belonging to belonging to a strong group that finally managed to acquire its own identity – one different from the other components of the Lebanese society - on the Lebanese, regional and international scenes.

Even though Montefiore asserts that "to acknowledge myself as belonging (de facto) to a given class of description is one thing, to identify myself with that class is another"[35] in Lebanon one leads to the other. Very few Shiites do not identify themselves as such, and this unfortunately applies to other Lebanese sects too.

Contributing to the topic of identity, Charles Taylor argues that "to know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose."[36] Identity is the frame within which one can act.

Taylor concludes his argument by stating that "after all, a group may perfectly be well constituted by a number of essentially autonomous individuals coming together to constitute it in the knowledge that united they stand while separately they are each of them in danger of falling."[37] Applied to Lebanon, Taylor's argument explains inter Shiite developments and the need for Shiites to stand together and to create a distinct and single identity. It too enlightens us on why coalitions occurred and are occurring in Lebanon and on why the Lebanese political scene is divided into 8 and 14 March.

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[35] Ibid., 100.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 101.

David Boucher in *Political Theories of International Relations* argues that national identity predominates the individual or the group ones as being "one's primary loyalty and identity."[38] Unfortunately in Lebanon this is not the case. Ethnic unity is very important in the study of Shiites' identity – noting that not only Shiites affiliate themselves to their sect; all Lebanese do. Boucher discusses the concept of identity trans-nationalization which is very important in the case of this thesis. The Khomeini revolution as the thesis later clarifies affirmed the presence of a country and created an identity for Shiites all over the world whether Arab or Persian. Identity trans-nationalization is very common in Lebanon as all of the sects are affiliated religiously and culturally to external powers whether regional or international. In fact in Lebanon identity trans-nationalization is a way to assert for oneself an identity and a way to preserve the acquired identity.

In a multi-ethnic society, each group would naturally develop an aspiration for self-determination especially in an anarchical system where there is no primary national identity. Shiite aspiration to self-determination and to the creation of *Wilayat al Faqih* in Lebanon has negatively impacted the construction of a national identity within the Shiites' subjects.

For Liah Greenfield, national identity among other reasons makes one proud.[39] In this definition nationality comes into play as it emphasizes the importance of belonging to a nation-state and not just to a state which is lacking in Lebanon. There is a consciousness of belonging and wanting to belong to a nation-state, hence the individual ought to be actively involved in the building of a national identity; for this to happen the individual should feel that he belongs. Few belong in Lebanon and

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[38] David Boucher, *Theories of International Relations : From Thucydides to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 387.
[39] Ibid., 388.

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Shiites like other sects do not belong to that minority . They were not at all associated to the 1943 National Pact nor did they belong to Bechara El Khoury's and Riyadh El Solh's Lebanese vision/identity.

## 2.6    Why Constructivism when Studying Hezbollah

Created in 1982 as a reaction to the 1979 Iranian revolution, Hezbollah gained ground quickly within both the Shiite and the Lebanese scenes. The party's strong and cohesive internal organization along with its religious ideology advancing the importance of Shiism and of the *Wilayat al Faqih* on the Lebanese political front appealed to most Shiites. The party of God was quickly perceived as the savior of the Shiites on the political, religious, economic and more importantly social grounds.

The study of Hezbollah is no easy task due to Hezbollah being a non-sate actor par excellence, engaged in continuous balancing of power within the Lebanese political realm and in the regional and international spheres. Therefore, pluralism coupled with realism contribute to the effective study and understanding of Hezbollah.

However, both theories fail to take into account the importance of the multi ethnic Lebanese context in which identity and fear of the other are the main drivers of internal, regional and international politics. In fact, identity and fear of the other are key concepts shaping the interactions of Hezbollah with other different Lebanese parties, groups and sects.

In what follows, the research roughly exposes the fundamentals of the realist and of the pluralist schools in order to assert, at a later stage, the need for a

constructivist approach to study Hezbollah, the main driver of Shiite identity and rise to power in Lebanon.

According to realism, states are chief actors in international relations.[40] Only relations between states matter in the system and the status and role of non-sate actors are of lesser importance.

Moreover, the realist state is a unitary and rational actor. The state is always to take the most rational decision "by maximizing its benefits and minimizing the costs" [41] related to each alternative. Further more the state adopts one stance despite internal bureaucratic differences.

States are primary subjects of international law per the realist school enjoying a permanent population, a distinct territory; a government and an ability to entertain relations with other entities.

As such, the distribution of capabilities - according to realism - occurs between states or between independent entities possessing a defined territory, a permanent population and a sovereign government.

Although the balance of power concept is fully exposed in the following section, it is important to note at this stage - for the sake of grasping the realist contribution to the study of Hezbollah - that in anarchical environments states tend to balance against each other.

Realism can not be fully applied in the study of Hezbollah because it fails to account for the importance of non state actors such as Hezbollah. However, the realist balance of power concept applies to the study of the power relations and interactions between different Lebanese groups, parties and sects.

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[40] Mark Kauppi and Paul Viotti, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond* (Viacom Company, 1999), p.6.
[41] Ibid., 7.

Studying the distribution of power capabilities between Hezbollah and the different other Lebanese components is decisive for the understanding of the case and the role of the party of God in the Shiites' quest for power in Lebanon.

Since the end of the civil war, Lebanon has been witnessing the re-building and empowerment of its state institutions. Even though in very rare cases did Lebanon witness a governmental vacuum, still the Lebanese Government has never been a strong one. The country lacks a strong central authority that speaks and acts in the name of the whole country and of all of the sects that compose the country. Furthermore, the government's role is hindered by the role and strength Hezbollah has and is acquiring especially when it comes to its military wing.

The Lebanese Government is far from being described or considered as unitary, its decisions are not at all rational, and its components are constantly engaged in different balances of power built according to interests and on the need to contain the other – because we fear the other we fear his strength.

Rather than relying on realism to study Hezbollah, many have attempted to analyze the Party of God by subjecting it to a pluralist theoretical framework.

The pluralist school stresses the importance of the individual or the group as a unit of analysis. The input and the contributions of an individual or of a group of individuals are at the core of the pluralist school and at the core of foreign politics because individuals being representative of governments, countries or organizations make key decisions that affect and shape external relations.

The pluralist theory has four assumptions. The first assumption grants importance to the role of non-state actors in the conduct of international relations. This statement clearly contradicts and discredits the realist assumption regarding the status of states as the most important actors. In fact the pluralist theory sheds the light

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over the importance that should be attributed to non-state actors or to transnational actors in the shaping of world's politics.

Second, for the pluralist, "the state is not a unitary actor."[42] The state's foreign policy in particular is influenced by the interactions between groups and individuals. Accordingly, foreign policy is the consequence of clashes and interactions between these different components.

Third, pluralists argue that the state's decisions are not always rational mainly because they result from an interaction between the different individuals, groups and bureaucracies involved in the decision-making process. "Misperception or bureaucratic politics may dominate decision-making, leading to poor decisions that are often suboptimal."[43]

Finally, "for pluralists, the agenda of international politics is extensive."[44] Security and military issues do not dictate anymore the conduct of international relations/politics. Social, economic, ecological and other welfare issues are creating interdependence and collaboration between the different state entities at the expense of the deceitful balance of power.

Even though pluralism strongly emphasizes the non-state actors' role, pluralists study the contributions of individuals, groups and bureaucracies to international relations and world politics. They fail to observe the role of non-state actors within the state as they do not really take into account intra state relations.

Consequently, pluralism would have served as a good theoretical framework in the study of Hezbollah's foreign policy or the role of Hezbollah on the international scene because it would have asserted the contributions of the party to world politics.

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 200.
[44] Ibid.

The failure of pluralism to focus on the relations between the different non-state actors that constitute a state clearly suggests that similarly to realism, pluralism can not explain the case of Hezbollah in the Shiite rise to power in Lebanon.

When rising to power in a multi-ethnic society such as in Lebanon, one has to continuously clash with the other, fear the other and try to contain him. The other is a big dilemma and understanding him means understanding his history, aspirations, affiliations, interests and most importantly identity.

Identity complex and fear of extinction have always been and are serious problems influencing the political actions of the different Lebanese groups and sects. It has been common for all groups in Lebanon to ascertain and impose their identity on others as a way to govern and to protect themselves.

Hezbollah is no exception. In fact the party managed to create a dominant Shiite identity and has benefited from that identity to advance its interests and to rise to power. The party was lately engaged in military actions specifically the May 08 events to protect that same identity.

Shiites started by identifying themselves as Moslems in Greater Lebanon. During and following the civil war and with the creation of Hezbollah the religious bond developed into a sectarian vision and identity of the self.


## 2.7    Conclusion


Even though Wendt deals more with identities' contributions to state relations, the research on one hand examines identity contributions to intra-state power relations in a multi ethnic Lebanese society composed of prominent non-state actors on the internal, regional and international spheres.

As can be noted, constructivism and the focus on the role of identity are fundamental for understanding the Shiite rise to power in Lebanon. Still and in the Lebanese context, Shiites interact daily with different others; others with dissimilar identities and interests. These interactions are mainly sectarian. Sectarianism in Lebanon contributed to the building of the Shiite identity, as it is one of those structures that govern exchanges between Lebanese individuals and groups. Understanding the Shiite rise to power and identity building process requires going through and exposing sectarianism and the consequent balances of power between the different sects that are shaping the communication between the latter internally and externally.

# Chapter 3

# Sectarianism

## 3.1    Introduction

Assessing the role of sectarianism in Lebanese politics and its role in the different balances of power that have taken place since the creation of Greater Lebanon is decisive in the study of the Shiites rise to power and of their power relations with other Lebanese groups and sects.

## 3.2    Political Realism and Balance of Power

Power is at the core of political realism whereby states seek to increase and enhance their power. In fact realism argues that states define their interests in terms of power against and supremacy over each other.

According to Hans Morgenthau – one of the founding fathers of classical realism – "international politics is a struggle for power"[45], and power is both a means and an end whereby states and individuals may serve as means to other states and individuals' ends.

The balance of power concept is extracted from the concept of power itself and usually occurs in an anarchical context. "States find it expedient to band together and pool their capabilities whenever one state or group of states appears to be

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[45] Robert Keohane, *Neo Realism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 10.

gathering a disproportionate amount of power, thus threatening to dominate the world, or even a portion of it."[46]

States can enter into coalitions and enhance their military force in order to counter balance the strength of a particular foe state or group of states hence the international system witnesses a certain distribution of capabilities be it on regional or international levels. States will balance "both internally by reallocating resources to national security, and externally, primarily through alliances and other formal and informal agreements."[47] States maintain a certain balance of power to avoid the predominance of a single power.

Henry Kissinger argues that the balance of power "does not occur automatically"[48]; it is the outcome of official foreign policy. States create and work on maintaining certain power distributions between each others. More particularly statesmen – and here the focus is on the contribution of the individual to the making of Foreign Policy – are directly and voluntarily involved.

Contradicting the voluntarist assumption Keneth Waltz argues that "Balance of power is an attribute of the system of states that will occur whether it is willed or not"[49]. States are unitary and egoistic units that interact to preserve and defend their own interests. As an outcome of such interactions, a balance of capabilities will take place between the different entities, without having to work for it. The power of the other state/states is a threat to one's power and survival; states interact upon this assumption and the balance of power is created.

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[46] Mark Kauppi and Paul Viotti, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond* (Massachusetts: Viacom Company, 1999), 71.
[47] Scott Burchill et al., *Theories of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 36.
[48] Mark Kauppi and Paul Viotti, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond* (Massachusetts: Viacom Company, 1999), 72.
[49] Ibid.

Realists place the state at the center of international relations and further attribute the balance of power concept to states. Even though Kissinger argues throughout the Voluntarist assumption that individuals play a major role, realism fails to address the distribution of capabilities within the state and more specifically between different groups within multi-ethnic states and societies.

One can argue that individuals or groups of individuals, like states, seek to increase and enhance their power in anarchical environments. There is a struggle of power between individuals; accordingly, individuals may contribute to the balance of power creation and can be the subject of a certain distribution of capabilities within the state arena.

## 3.3    Lebanon's Mosaic Society

The different political groups and sects in Lebanon fear the domination of one over the others. The absence of a strong state apparatus drives the different groups to strive for their own survival as no central authority is engaged in the democratic checks and balances system. Hence they enter into coalitions and alliances to protect themselves and to counterbalance the threat of other group(s)/ sect(s).

When it comes to Lebanon, both Kissinger's and Waltz's views apply. The creation of Greater Lebanon along with other events that consequently followed such as the establishment of the Lebanese Republic, the 1943 National Pact , the 1958 semi civil war, the 1975 civil war and the cold war imposed a certain distribution of capabilities between the different sects and groups. First the Lebanese found each other unwillingly involved in regional and international balances of power and needed to take lines. By taking lines they started to actively participate in the distribution of

capabilities. Their active participation was furthered when the Lebanese realized that their groups' and sects' survival depended on the continuity of the balance of power and upon striving to protect oneself from the threat of the other.

The Lebanese individual tend to directly affiliates himself to his sect , and his survival in Lebanon is based upon his sect's survival. A sect can not survive without maintaining a certain balance of threat with other sects in order for no one group to dominate the others. Consequently, we need to understand at this point how sectarianism in Lebanon has affected the Shiite identity construction and how it is affecting the role of the Shiites in the different balances of power that have occurred since the creation of Greater Lebanon and until our present days.

"It is said that when God created Lebanon, the other countries were jealous. Why should this tiny land on the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean be so favored with mountains, streams and rivers, with forested slopes and the fertile plain of the Beqaa? God the story goes on, saw that the complaints were just. And to correct imbalance he created the Lebanese."[50]

The Lebanese population is mainly composed of Christians and Muslims. Christians' major division is between Maronites, Greek Catholics, Armenian Catholics, Syrian Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox and Syrian Orthodox. Muslims are divided into Sunnis and Shiites. There are also Druze, and there used to be a small Jewish community which is now greatly reduced. Of the previously mentioned sects, the largest ones are the Maronites, the Greek Catholics, the Greek Orthodox, the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Druze.

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[50] Michael Johnson, *All Honourable Men : the Social Origins of War in Lebanon* (London: Center for Lebanese Studies, 2001), 2.

Sectarianism, "a key concept in Lebanese identity and politics"[51] has accompanied Lebanese politics since the Ottoman period. The Ottoman Empire was a Sunni state composed of Muslim, Christian and Jewish subjects. Although classified as Muslims, Shiism was not recognized as a sect by the Ottomans.[52]

At the time of the creation of Greater Lebanon, Maronites differed from other Christian and Muslim sects. They benefited from a determined geographic area. They considered Mount Lebanon as their nation/home. "Their sectarian loyalty took a territorial dimension"[53], adding to the definition of "Libanism"[54], a Maronite aspect.

This new aspect created a huge integration problem for the Orthodox and Moslem newcomers as Maronites defined "Lebanon's identity in terms of their own cultural preferences and class interests."[55]

Detached from their mother country, refusing to take part of the new Lebanese state and associated to a Maronite Lebanon not accounting for their religious and identity differences, newcomers found themselves aliens. The failure and unwillingness of the Maronites at the time to create a distinct state identity contributed to the rise of the respective confessional affiliations of the other groups. Not knowing what to do, the other sects mimicked the Maronites by grouping themselves as sects and creating their own vision of Lebanon.

The French mandate adopted confessionalism in political and social issues such as marriage, divorce, inheritance. "The Shiite leadership, afraid of having its representation fused with that of the Sunnis under a common Islamic ticket, obtained

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[51] Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and Making of National identities* (New York: Columbia Press University, 2008), 8.
[52] Majed Al Halawi, *A Lebanon defied : Musa al-Sadr and the Shi'a Community* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1992), 31.
[53] Bassem Khalifah, *The Rise and Fall of Christian Lebanon* (Toronto: York Press, 2001), 3.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and Making of National identities* (New York: Columbia Press University, 2008), 21.

from the French governor a decree recognizing that the Shiite Muslims in Greater Lebanon form an independent religious community."[56]

"Upon independence, two men Bishara el Khoury, a Maronite and the first president of the Republic of Lebanon, and Riyadh el Solh, a Sunni and the first prime minister of Lebanon, came to a verbal agreement whereby Muslims residing in Greater Lebanon would stop their endeavors to re-unite with Syria, and in return, the Christians would give up their demand for French protection."[57] Viewed as residents, Moslems became relatively active in Lebanese political life after 1943.

## 3.4    Lebanon after the National Pact

The 1943 National Pact was a sectarian formula par excellence put together to balance and distribute the political posts between the different sects. It gave birth to a system in which the president is Maronite, the prime minister Sunni and the speaker of the house Shiite. Assigning each sect a political position created a sectarian balance between the dominant confessions.

Bishara el Khoury and Riad El Solh sought at the time that they succeeded in creating a common vision of Lebanon that will pave the way for one identity. In fact they only succeeded in forging and enforcing respective sectarian identities and allegiances. The Maronite – Sunni pact created a sectarian political system, a system that jeopardized the creation of a common Lebanese national identity.

At the onset of the civil war, confessional allegiance and identification was at its peak. Confessionalism added to the complexity of the Lebanese picture. It

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[56] Majed Al Halawi, *A Lebanon defied : Musa al-Sadr and the Shi'a Community* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1992), 41.
[57] Youssef M. Choueiri, ed., *State and society in Syria and Lebanon* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1993), 69.

permitted Lebanese to perceive one another as a threat. It offered them a sense of belonging.[58]

The Taif agreement and the post Taif political systems worsened the situation. Taif corrected sectarian representation based on new grounds. It took the powers out of the Maronites' hands to the benefit of the Sunnis along with an increase in Shiite powers.

Even though the 1990 agreement positions sectarianism as a temporary state, one needs to ascertain and realize that Lebanon's modern history and near or foreseeable future will be one of confessionalism as sects fear each other and as the optimal way to survive is to advocate and protect a sectarian identity.

Sectarian identity was not built out of the bloom. In fact Lebanese *zu'ama* (confessional leaders) has played a major role in creating and sustaining confessionalism in the Levant. Loyalty to the sect is expressed by supporting without questioning the *za'im* of the confession in concern.

"The term *za'im* (plural:*zu'ama'*) comes from the Turkish world ziamet, which denoted a military commander superior to the other officers in the military corps. On the other hand this term has been adopted by the feudal system within the Ottoman Empire ( outside Turkey) to differentiate a certain category of feudal dignitary from the bulk of feudal lords. On the domestic scene Lebanese society had further transformed this term into one based on interplay of religious communities which had their own regional and international connections to counter balance any attempts to disturb the distribution of power."[59]

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[58] Michael Johnson, *All Honourable Men : the Social Origins of War in Lebanon* (London: Center for Lebanese Studies, 2001), 20.
[59] Bassem Khalifah, *The Rise and Fall of Christian Lebanon* (Toronto: York Press, 2001), 71-72.

Bassem Khalifeh's description in *The Rise and Fall of Christian Lebanon* portrays the *zu'ama* as a confessional ruling elite that can not survive without fully exploiting the sectarian factor[60]. The *za'im* is a political leader that plays on religious and sectarian affiliations to maintain his rule and himself in power. In addition to fabricating a cohesive and strong internal sectarian base, Lebanese *zu'ama* play and bet a lot on their external affiliations which help them survive internally.

They pursue their interests at the expense of the state and of the latter's interests. A weak Lebanese state serves them best. Their power is sectarian and their survival is dependent on confessionalism. Their coalitions are not stable and change very often drawing hence different balances of power.

At the end of World War I, the French and the British divided the Ottoman Empire into artificial entities in accordance with the 1916 Sykes Picot Agreement. The geographical partition of Syria served the creation of Greater Lebanon, the safe haven of the Christians and more particularly the Maronites in a Muslim dominant region.

General Henry Gouraud, the first French High Commissioner proclaimed in 1920 l'Etat du Grand Liban leading to the 1926 formation of the Lebanese Republic. In addition to Mount Lebanon, Beirut, Sidon, Tyre, Hasbayya, Rashayya and Baalbeck were included to form Greater Lebanon.

To the newly created state, the mandatory power designed a constitution, regulations for legislative institutions, a democratic government and a tricolored flag (as the French one) with the cedar that was directly associated to the Maronites, hence ascertaining a Maronite identity.

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[60] Ibid., 73.

The balance of power that existed at the time of the creation of Greater Lebanon, greatly favored the Maronites over the other sects. In 1932 to avert the presidential elections of Mohammad Al Jisr, a Muslim Lebanese, the French suspended the constitution. The suspension outraged the Muslims and mainly the Sunnis.

## 3.5    Shiites in the Lebanese Equation

Even though some scholars argue that Shiites contributed to the demonstrations that took place at the time, the incident awakened the Sunnis and made them conscious of their power and of the need to participate actively in the Lebanese political system. The Shiites' awakening was to be further delayed.

The above incident depicts the reality that Lebanon was being modeled along strong and rough sectarian boundaries since the French mandate. Along with the French, the Maronites were in control of the political system. Sunnis were politically surviving while Shiites were deeply suffering from the balance of power that was drawn at the time.

Unlike Sunnis who were mostly educated and living in urban areas, Shiite areas added to Mount Lebanon – South and Beqaa valley – "were heavily populated and less developed from the rest of Lebanon. This created along with the political imbalance, a socio economic imbalance in the make up of the new country – an imbalance that became the source of eternal dissatisfaction."[61] The distribution of capabilities disfavored the Shiites who were mostly illiterate and poor peasants suffering from severe economical and social deprivation.

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[61] Ibid., 5.

"The pressures brought to bear on the Shiite society by the relative decline of the agricultural sector were aggravated by the regional, and therefore communal, concentration of the infrastructure needed for other sectors of the Lebanese economy in the non – Shiite areas."[62]

The disparities seemed obvious. The Christians were better of than the Moslems as they held the resources and the power. The South and the Beqaa were the underprivileged regions in Lebanon and the Shiites were socially and economically disadvantaged.

The National Pact which reduced the Lebanese political life into a zero sum game – under-represented the Shiites in the political posts. "According to the 1932 census, the Shiite community constituted 19.6% of the total Lebanese population, and 40.2% of its Muslim half. By the dictates of National Pact, this entitled the community to 19.2 % of the country's parliamentary positions, and to the number of cabinet seats and civil service posts commensurate with its weight among Muslims"[63]. Still their representation in the different ministerial cabinets was similar to that of the Druze.

In fact, the pact was one between Maronites represented by Bechara el Khoury and Sunnis represented by Riad el Solh, hence drawing a balance of power between those two sects.

Dr. Jihad Banout – the person in charge of the publications at the Central Cultural office at Amal Movement – argues that "the 1943 Pact put the Shiites at the forefront of the Lebanese political scene along with the Maronites and the Sunnis." [64] Yet, they were neither participating nor even involved in the articulation of Khoury

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[62] Majed Al Halawi, *A Lebanon defied : Musa al-Sadr and the Shi'a Community* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1992), 60.
[63] Ibid., 98.
[64] Dr. Jihad Banout, interview by author, Beirut, March 6, 2010.

and Solh's new vision of Lebanon. They were granted the speaker's seat as a symbolic role. They did not even feel concerned with the pact. They were more worried about survival than about political participation and representation.

Sunnis considered themselves able to speak in the name of the Shiites. Today Maronites, Sunnis, Shiites, Druze and the other sects are engaged in different balances of power and none can control nor claim to speak on the behalf of the other, because each sect is self-aware of its distinct identity and interests.

Regrettably, the National Pact failed to address economic, social and cultural pressures. It was a political agreement par excellence, not much national undertaken to protect the sects' identity and survival. "As early as 1960, per capita income in Beirut was $803 compared with only $151 in the South."[65] "The Mountain with 29% of the population, had 38.2% of all schools, whilst the South with 19% if population had only 14.8% of the schools."[66] The severe socio-economic conditions along with the Shiites suffering from the Israeli retaliations to Palestinian military actions - from the Lebanese southern border with Israel – hastened the Shiites' exodus to Beirut and the formation of the "poverty belt" around the capital. The Shiites' exodus ignited their political, economic, social and most importantly confessional consciousness and organization. They cultivated a sense of frustration and an awareness of their situation. "The migrants need a community in the place of the village community and extended family. Thus a new kind of social consciousness of the ethnic or religious community grows up among them."[67]

The Shiites' sectarian awareness and awakening was aggravated by the fact that Lebanon was a society where confessional allegiance was the strongest.

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[65] Bassem Khalifah, *The Rise and Fall of Christian Lebanon* (Toronto: York Press, 2001), 15.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Halim Barakat, ed., *Toward a Viable Lebanon* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), 5.

By creating Greater Lebanon, "France embarked on creating and building an economically viable state around Mount Lebanon, whereby political institutions, territorial diversity and a strong homogeneous establishment"[68] would solidify the Maronites' presence and power.

Upon independence the Maronites maintained a similar self-centric approach. Leaning to Moslems claim for greater participation, they undertook a verbal agreement with the Sunnis that failed to acknowledge the Shiites' as components equal in rights and duties and to address their utmost political economic and social concerns.

"By 1975, an estimated 40% of the total population of South Lebanon had left for Beirut."[69] Once in Beirut, the Shiites' awakened upon the need to increase their political leverage, to be part of the distribution of power capabilities and to enhance the balance of threat in their favor.

## 3.6    The Civil War

"The five years 1970-75 witnessed an unprecedented outbreak of rural revolts, and more strikes than in the near quarter century since the departure of the French."[70]

The legitimacy of the state was hindered by its failure to either contain the protests or resolve the protestors' problems. The Army was deadlocked by political decisions. It failed to resist to and fight the repetitive Israeli attacks and incursions on the Lebanese soil and to protect the Lebanese citizens.

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[68] Bassem Khalifah, *The Rise and Fall of Christian Lebanon* (Toronto: York Press, 2001), 5.
[69] Ibid., 16.
[70] Tabitha Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987), 130.

Consequently, political parties turned to organize their own militias, which grew to be more powerful and freer to operate than the Army, "the instrument of Maronite power structure."[71]

The collective failure of Lebanese sects to foster a sense of belonging to a nation-state and to adopt a common, comprehensive national identity, triggered major internal divisions that lead to and hastened the April 13 events.

On April 13 , 1975, a bus carrying Palestinian and Lebanese was ambushed in Ain–Remaneh (a region located in Mount Lebanon). Responding to an earlier assassination attempt directed against their leader Pierre el Gemayel, the Phalanges opened fire leading to a wave of violence that spread all over the country progressively.

The Lebanese civil war occurred in different rounds, involving different protagonists. Syrians interfered playing one party against the other, preserving a certain balance of power or more appropriately terror between the different belligerent parties for the sake of protecting the Syrian regime and serving its interests in Lebanon and regionally, in the war against Israel and in its relations with regional Arab countries and with Cold War powers.

Different balances of power were constantly drawn and redrawn in the favor of one sect/group or the other. "About 170, 000 people have perished; twice as many were wounded or disabled; close to two thirds of the population experienced some form of dislocation or up rootedness from their homes and communities."[72]

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[71] Ibid., 165.
[72] Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 232.

## 3.7    Conclusion

In trying to answer Kamal Salibi's interesting question, "why did it all happen"[73], we come to the conclusion that the vulnerability and fertility of the Lebanese ground to sectarian divisions, confessional hatred, identity issues, socio-economic problems, religious differences, political disputes, regional and international factors and interventions manifested itself in nearly two decades of civil war that devastated what used to be known as the Switzerland of the Middle East.

The conflict was a religious one between the Christians to the Moslems; a political one between the right to the left; a socio-economic one between the peasants and the landlords; an internal one between the different Lebanese communities and parties; and a regional one between the Syrians, the Palestinians, the Israelis, the Egyptians and many other Arab countries and an international one portrayed under the aegis of the cold war.

Fighting for survival and the ability to craft their own  identities, the Lebanese permitted themselves all means of violence to demonize the other. The Lebanese failed to run their country and externally Lebanon was drawn into the Arab cold war and into the heart of the Palestine issue.

Furthermore, the war strengthened family, community and sectarian ties. "Since the boundaries and horizons within which groups circulated were becoming more constricted, it is natural that these tightly knit localities should become breeding grounds for heightening communal and territorial identities."[74]

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[73] Kamal S. Salibi, *Cross Roads to Civil War* (New York: Caravan Books, 1976), 159.
[74] Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 265.

Bounding led to deeper communal and confessional commitments and identification, to deeper psychological, cultural and ideological barriers between communities and to a harsher religious and sectarian consciousness. Lebanese "religiosity was declining (as measured by the degree of changes in the intensity of their spiritual beliefs, religious commitments, and observation of rituals practices and duties of their faith).. Their confessional and sectarian identities however were becoming sharper."[75]

In 1990, the guns were silenced but deep-rooted mistrust, aggressions and fears stayed put.

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[75] Ibid., 271

# Chapter 4

## Shiite political identity as formed by Mousa Sadr and Amal Movement

### 4.1    Identity Evolution:

#### 4.1.1    Shiite Identity Prior to Sadr: Preliminary Features:

Understanding the Shiites' rise to power which accompanied the formation of identity and crystallization of interests requires digging into post National Pact Lebanese Shiite history and development through the consideration of actors responsible for the construction of a Shiite identity.

"Up until the arrival of Sayid Mousa Sadr, there was a present but weak and frail voice of Shiite representation both politically and religiously."[76] "MP Rachid Baydoun instigated the first Shiite political experience embodied by *Hezb al Talai'* (Talai' party), which was very appealing to young educated Shiites and proved to have a stronghold in the streets of Beirut. Major contributing factors to the formation of Shiite identity were the Shiite migration to the city and the formation of a Shiite foreign capital, due to immigration."[77]

"*Al Talai'* primary objectives were to reinstate the rights of the Shiite population both statutorily and administratively and to organize the affairs of the migrating Shiite community to Beirut. Furthermore, it established *Al Madrassa al Amiliyah* (*Al Amiliyah* school) that still stands today."[78]

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[76] Dr. Jihad Banout, interview by author, Beirut, March 6, 2010.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

"*Al-Talai'* alarmed the Lebanese state, the latter of which called upon Ahmad

el Assad to establish *Al Nahda* party – *Hezb al Nahda* to counter the threat of *Hezb el Talai'*.[79]

"A series of rivalries occurred between the two parties affecting the Shiite sect

as a whole and manifested into violent confrontations similar to the ones that occurred

between Amal and Hezbollah. Consequently, the Lebanese state dissolved both

parties."[80]

"It is also important to shed light at this stage on the contributions of

prominent Shiite intellectuals such as Hussein Charaf el Din who founded the Jaafari

school in Tyre, Mohsen al Amin, Ahmad Rida, Sleiman Daher and the journalist

Ahmad Aref el Zein who published the first magazine in Southern Lebanon."[81]


### 4.1.2   The Coming of Mousa Sadr: Solidification of Identity


Characterized as an ethnic entrepreneur in the words of Frederick Barth "with

projects that help construct differences to others, be they based on language, race, or

religion"[82], Mousa Sadr is the figure "who made the Shiite community conscious of

the power of its number and history… and of its Lebanese identity.[83]"

Sadr firstly presented himself as loyal to the Shiites, to their cause and

concerns. This bond of loyalty that he created and fortified made him in no time the

sole and most powerful representative of the Shiite community in the pre 1975 era.

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[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and Making of National Identities* (New York: Columbia Press University, 2008), 6.
[83] Majed Al Halawi, *A Lebanon defied: Musa al-Sadr and the Shi'a Community* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1992), 127.

Mousa Sadr's education and persona were crucial factors in the conceptualization and preservation of his visions and followers. His advance to the Shiites' and Lebanese scenes was quick, as he knew what problems to tackle, and how to approach the other in a time where anarchy was persistent and where parties had the upper hand over the state.

He reorganized Shiite activism that was mainly under the *zu'ama*'s control or channeled through communism and Nasserism as a result of the Palestinian *Nakba* (catastrophe) and the rise of Gamal Abdl Nasser in Egypt and the Arab world.

"Sadr was a political activist engaged in an open dialogue with the Christian community, fighting all aspects of poverty and involved in the social wellbeing of the Shiite community."[84]

He dug into Shiite history in Lebanon to remind his community and the remaining Lebanese of deep-seated Shiite roots. When asked who are the Shiites, Sadr replied by introducing to the Lebanese and to the Shiites' themselves their identity. "They are loyal devoted Lebanese citizens, who believe in the common Arab fate, and consider their first problem that of Zionist greed. As for a quest for their psychological characteristics I will leave it to others to analyze; praising oneself is an ugly thing. Socially, we find them, despite a high level of illiteracy, overwhelmingly geared toward education, and on this path we find them on a quest to improve their social status in different areas.[85]"

By making them aware of who they were, their belonging, and of their alleged aspirations, he put aside the feeling of intruders that they had and started building on

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[84] Ibid., 128.
[85] Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and Making of National Identities* (New York: Columbia Press University, 2008), 25.

one level inter-communal ties between Shiites themselves and on the other national ties between Shiites and Lebanon.

Shiites perception of themselves, and hence identity as aliens was to change to become one of active involvement, leadership, and self-sacrifice in Lebanon's history and for the Lebanese state. However, the Shiite rise to power did not occur in void. It happened when the time had come for the Shiites to start perceiving and identifying themselves as an active community aware of itself, its rights, and most importantly its power.

Mousa Sadr was very aware of the need to organize the Shiite community. "He thus proceeded to build the organizational framework that would galvanize the community's resources and channel them into effective concerted action, as well as enhance its capacity to engage in a bargaining process toward a new social contract in the country[86]." His objective was to revise the National Pact which discriminated against his community's political representation, be it in the legislative or in the executive body. To reach this end, he needed to create a cohesive Shiite community able of entering into dialogue and into balances of power with the Maronites and the Sunnis.

Sadr advocated the abolishment of political sectarianism but never called for the secularization of the state as he played a lot on the role of religion to define a religious identity to Lebanese Shiites. He was very astute in portraying the Shiites out of the political confessional formula for the purpose of fashioning a patriotic identity,

He was also very aware of the core Lebanese societal issues/problems and on top of them, the fear of the other, and the identity complex. Consequently he adopted a reassuring stance when approaching the Christians in order not to scare them of the

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[86] Majed Al Halawi, *A Lebanon defied: Musa al-Sadr and the Shi'a Community* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1992), 134.

"*Imlaq al Shii*"[87], a categorization whose purpose was to make his community realize how numerous and powerful it is, noting that the description of Shiites as *Imlaq* is not an innocent one.

After making the Shiites conscious of their sectarian and religious identity, their rootedness in the Lebanese society and their power, and after benefitting from the Shiites' awakening that resulted from the exodus to Beirut and in the creation of the poverty belt, Sadr did not directly attack the political scene and the issues of Shiites' political misrepresentation. He started advocating his community's rights gradually beginning with problems as poverty and unequal distribution of resources to attain political equality and the need to further political participation.

His gradual approach to increasing the power of the community was in favor of the Shiites. It helped them further enhance their identity, prioritize their interests, develop their internal/communal organization, and become more darling politically. It paved the way for an "easier" move towards other better established internal communities be it on the social, economical, or political levels.

He then openly criticized the government's politics and failure to act in favor of those forgotten Lebanese citizens by improving their status.

Although credit should be attributed to Mousa Sadr on the social front, his aim was to enhance the Shiites' political awareness, self-affirmation and consciousness of a distinct Shiite identity in order to drag them to the balances of power that were occurring at the time and in the subsequent distribution of capabilities that took place later on during the civil war. He encouraged his community to act in terms of its own interests, linking identity to interests.

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[87] The Shiite giant, in the reference to the large number of Shiites in Lebanon.

He rejected the naming of the Shiites as *Matawila*, hence refusing their *Matawila* identity – a pejorative identity - and embedding one of revolt and courage. "On levels both conscious and subliminal, the new Shiite identity linked men, through time and space, with other Shiite in larger realms.[88]"

Dr. Banout argues that "the Imam fortified Lebanese Shiism identity emphasizing Lebanon as the end country of all Lebanese."[89] "Prior to the Imam's arrival, the lack of interest of the Lebanese state in Shiites instilled a deeply rooted identity crisis. Sayed Mousa redirected Shiites' belonging from Arabism and Leftism to the Lebanese state by engaging the latter in the development of poor and deprived Shiite regions, hence filling in the vacuum it had caused."[90]

"Sadr elucidated the individual and national Shiite identity by establishing the Shiite political society and fitting it into the Lebanese mosaic. Unlike Hezbollah, he never maneuvered his Iranian nationality to link the Shiites to Iran nor to downplay and weaken the national identity necessary to Shiite rise to power."[91]

Perceived as Neo-Shism by Fouad Ajami, Mousa Sadr "manipulated and in time, overthrew the dominant Shiite tradition of political quietism and withdrawal."[92] He revisited the tale of Karbala – elaborated in the next chapter - stressing on the courage of Imam Hussein and his followers. By doing so, he touched upon the Shiites' vision of the self by advocating new identity considerations and by transferring the identity of submission to power to one of courage and awareness of strength.

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[88] Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* (New York: Cornell university Press, 1986), 155.
[89] Dr. Jihad Banout, interview by author, Beirut, March 6, 2010.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* (New York: Cornell university Press, 1986), 138.

## 4.2    Identity Institutionalization:

Sadr was worried of the repetitive Israeli retaliations to Palestinian actions from the South of Lebanon that were majorly hindering the Shiites and deepening the existing social, economic and political turmoil. Acting upon the non-existing state role, he created the *Hay'at Nasrat Al Janub* (Committee for the Aid of the South) to support and help the Southerners.

By putting his words into actions and becoming directly involved with the sores of his community, he enhanced his powers and those of the latter by proving to them that organized and united they can reach their political, economical and social enhancement and rise to reach power.

On the ground he was involved in "inaugurating, restructuring and rehabilitating Shiites social institutions such as *Al Muassa al Ijtima'iya* (Social Institution), *Bayt el Fata* and *Jamiyat al Bir wal Hassan* (Bir al Hassan Foundation). He helped the poor find jobs and launched the Institute of Islamic Studies."[93]

He created the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council (SISC) that would defend Shiites' rights, protect their interests, and organize their religious affairs according to the Shari'a. The Council was the first national council with a Shiite identity and served as a tool in the distribution of capabilities versus the Maronites and the Sunnis who viewed it as a direct challenge to their legitimacy. Sadr's political speech transformed drastically after the creation of the supreme council and was now directed towards the adjustment of the Lebanese political system.

Sadr introduced his agenda during the council's inauguration speech in May 1969. His program main principles were as follow:

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[93] Dr. Jihad Banout, interview by author, Beirut, March 13, 2010.

(1) To organize the affairs of the community and to work toward improving its socioeconomic standards of living.
(2) To carry out his responsibilities according to the dictates of the scripture.
(3) To strive for equality and harmony among Muslims.
(4) To cooperate with all Lebanese communities, and to protect the integrity and freedom of the Lebanese nation.
(5) To fight ignorance, poverty, underdevelopment, social injustice, and moral deterioration.
(6) To support the Palestinian resistance and to participate effectively with Arab countries for the liberation of Palestine.[94]

The agenda tackles political, economical, social, and regional issues. It calls for a higher Shiite action and responsibility achieved through an efficient internal organization and through the attainment of socio-economic standards. It also addresses the need for an equal footage between Sunnis and Shiites.

The agenda mentions and leverages the notion of the Lebanese nation and resumes the old Shiites role in protecting the nation, hence advocating a Shiite loyalty to Lebanon and a Lebanese identity. Sadr created for the Shiites a religious identity that will enable them later on to participate in the building of the Lebanese nation.

Sadr succeeded in starting a general strike for the support of the South and "clearly, 26 May 1970, stands as a watershed in contemporary Shiite history[95]." The demonstration was an accomplishment, and a manifestation of his capabilities and strength. Through it, Sadr advocated the possibility and legitimacy of Shiites taking things into their own hands if the government was not going to step in. He enhanced the Shiites' role and power by proving to them that if organized cohesively they can call for their rights and even be engaged in a peaceful and in a military resistance with a legal usage of arms.

The protest led to the birth of the *Harakat al Mahrumin* (The Movement of the Deprived). The movement's objective was to eliminate Shiite discrimination and

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[94] Majed Al Halawi, *A Lebanon defied: Musa al-Sadr and the Shi'a Community* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1992), 143.
[95] Ibid., 146.

protect the South by establishing its armed unit officially known as AMAL, *Afwaj al Muqawama al Lubnaniya.*

According to Majid Halawi *"Harakat al Mahrumin* was a Shiite movement in as much as Shiism, as a pedagogy, transcended sectarianism by awakening the critical consciousness of the oppressed, thus making it possible...[for them] to enter the historical process of [self-affirmation] as responsible Subjects."[96]

"As the sixties drew to a close, it became clear that the Shiite community had become a microcosm of Lebanon's class structure, comprised of a few *zu'ama* who were beginning to voice their concerns regarding the socio economic conditions in the Shiite heartlands, a solid bourgeoisie, a stratum of middle class bureaucrats, an industrial proletariat on the margins of a growing metropolis, a productive – albeit threatened – peasant society, a radicalized intelligentsia, and an ambitious and enterprising counter elite articulating new demands. All of these had begun to challenge the rules of the game and to question the distribution of power in the Lebanese system.[97]"

In March 1974, Mousa Sadr organized Amal as an armed militia. Its role was revitalized following the first Israeli Invasion of Lebanon, the 1978 disappearance of Sadr himself and the 1979 Khomeini revolution.

The 1978 Litani Operation that resulted in the advance of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) to the Litani river estranged the Shiites who were the major victims of the Israeli-Palestinian war and of the repetitive Israeli retaliations. "Amal stepped in to fill out the Southerners' security needs."[98]

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[96] Ibid., 156.
[97] Ibid., 150.
[98] Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shia: the Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1987), 51.

The mysterious vanishing of Mousa Sadr in Libya reawakened the sleeping movement. They used his disappearance to mobilize politically and militarily their constituency. By doing so the party deepened its sectarian identity.

The 1979 Islamic revolution permitted a Shiite revival and created a common religious identity. In addition to the promised political, military and financial support to the movement, Khomeini's revolution served as an inspiration to all Shiites including Amal. The latter perceived the revolution as the success of the conquered and drew from it the hope for better Shiite economic, social and political representation.

First and foremost, Amal presented itself as the military party that will meet Shiites' security demands by facing the *feday'in* (guerilla fighters) and rebuffing their entrance into the South and its communities. Consequently, it directed its animosity against the Palestinians whom they blamed for their situation. The south region became Amal's throttlehold even though the movement was not conclusively superior in the South on the military or organizational levels as it opposed, in addition to the feda'yin, leftist groups enjoying of a large Shiite base.

By calling for a higher Shiite representation in power, for effective actions of *Majles al Janub* (Council of the South) and for a larger Army and governmental role in the South, Amal in a way discredited at a national level the Shiites' capacity to defend themselves on their own as other organized militias and furthered enhanced their rise to power.

Strangely enough, Amal did not try to abuse the impact of the Khomeini revolution nor considered the establishment of a Shiite state in Lebanon. On the contrary, by advocating less confessionalism and a higher role for the Army and the

government, it added a national aspect to the Shiites sectarian identity thus positioning it in a Lebanese context.

Even though the state failed to meet the Shiites' needs and aspirations and continued on marginalizing and discriminating against them, the movement remained committed to the state and to the need of a political legitimacy and identification attainable via political institutions; refuting the benefits of military representation, despite being a militia par excellence that was engaged in military activities.

Amal linked identity to interests. It was self-conscious of its Shiite identity and was very fearful on the Shiites' survival which it directly linked to the survival of the state in Lebanon and of Lebanon as an independent and integral entity.

"Shiite must preserve Lebanon in order to preserve the social and political integrity of their community.[99]" Shiites can not survive in a partitioned Lebanon as in they would face the Palestinians and the left and accordingly lose the credit they gained since Mousa Sadr, as well as their sectarian identity at the expense of a larger communist or Palestinian one.

The movement called for equal opportunities, rights and obligations for all the Lebanese components, for a greater governmental role in the distribution and reallocation of resources and for more social and economic projects in the South and in Beirut's suburbs.

Involved in reforming politics in Lebanon, it recurrently called for the abolition of the sectarian equation.

Amal knew when to exploit the political mood of its supporters for interest purposes, linking all way long the Shiite rise to power in Lebanon to identity and interests and linking the Shiite identity to the interests of their community.

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[99] Ibid., 74.

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In post-war Lebanon, Amal became the voice and the agent of the Shiite community in state institutions, shaping on Shiite interests and national and sectarian identities.

As soon as it took control over the *Majles al Janub*, the party published a booklet on the South picturing Shiites as being fierce resisters and hard workers at the same time. Ideal citizens endowed of a high self-esteem and a capability of overcoming the worse, Shiites were attributed an identity with modern, national, loyalty, resistance, and coexistence aspects.

Hegemony over *Majles al Janub* was part of Amal's strategy to rise to power in Lebanon and to advance the interests of its community by pressing on new aspects of the Shiite identity be it on an individual or communal level.

"The dramatic rise in the number of Shiite-run educational centers during and after the civil war demonstrates the awareness of Shiite ethnic entrepreneurs that education is one important avenue to change their image in Lebanon as backward and that such institutions are important in producing and popularizing their ideologies[100]" identities and interests; hence acknowledging their rise to power.

Amal has long participated and still does in the education of the individual Shiite through *Madaris el Haraka*. "Among the stated goals of Amal educational centers is the promotion and solidification of belief in God (*tanmiya wa tarsikh al-iman bi Allah*), the promotion of the idea of national belonging, and the promotion of the idea of belonging to the soil of a Lebanon that is united and independent, while understanding its history and geography within the context of its Arab identity.[101]"

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[100] Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and Making of National Identities* (New York: Columbia Press University, 2008), 51.
[101] Ibid., 77.

*Madaris al Haraka* focus on the creation of "a specifically Lebanese Shi'ite citizen, the Shi'ite *homo nationalis,* with icons and symbols representing a Shi'ite identity[102]" and on the creation of a new vision of the Lebanese nation whereby Shiites are represented differently.

Along with the usage of specific history and religious books published by the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council - as national education did not account to their history, presence and aspirations - , it is through extra-curricular and more particularly scout activities that Amal forges religious identities through education. Additionally, these activities fashion a Shiite national citizen on the image and perception of Amal's ideology and identity.

Pretending to build a national identity Amal's "boy scouts activities, regardless of their particular forms, produced Shi'ite-centered nationalism because their goal is to organize a homogeneous, like-minded group regardless of differences in style.[103]"

Mohamad Nassrallah, the head of the executive committee in Amal Movement, emphasizes "the Lebanon first and foremost slogan as the fundamental characteristic of a national identity and the importance of Lebanon, a country of coexistence."[104]

It is true that to some extent Amal managed to create a Lebanese identity for the Shiite but not equivalent in force to the sectarian Shiite one. "Religious identities are often constructed and imagined through national ideologies[105]". This applies perfectly well to Amal.

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[102] Ibid., 84.
[103] Ibid., 85.
[104] Mohamad Nassrallah, interview by author, Beirut, March 6, 2010.
[105] Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and Making of National Identities* (New York: Columbia Press University, 2008), 11.

Throughout the readings the thesis came to acknowledge four Shiite components of Shiite identity: Islam, the Lebanese state, Zionism, and the relationship with Syria and Iran.

On the topic of Islam and as referred in the first principle of the Founding Document of *Harakat al Mahrumin*, "God is perceived as a wholly God."[106] The document does not start with a quotation from the Quran and neither Islam nor the prophet are mentioned. *Jihad* which is the core of the sixth principle is depicted as "a moral and religious duty to fight and liberate Palestine."[107] Amal defines itself as a "secular party"[108] and as "a national movement."[109]

On the topic of the Lebanese state, Amal advocates the importance of "the individuals' rights, freedom, dignity and integrity."[110] The individual is perceived within the state, using words such as citizenship in the document's fourth principle. The party refuses the concepts of *Zaama* and feudality and perceives confessionalism as "a threat to moral unity and political evolution."[111] It further advocates in the same principle the role of the state in ensuring "social justice and a fair and equal distribution of resources."[112] Amal also dwells on the importance of coexistence between the different Lebanese sects while portraying themselves in the fifth principle of the founding document as a national movement versus a Shiite one.

It is important to note at this stage that Amal has lived a dilemma between being a Shiite movement versus being a non-sectarian one. This tension which was de facto brought into existence with the party's inception holds until today.

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[106] Amal, *Founding document of Amal Movement* (1974), 18.
[107] Ibid., 19.
[108] Ibid., 20.
[109] Ibid., 19.
[110] Ibid., 18.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid., 19.

On Zionism and the Palestinian question, Amal members are committed to the Arab and Palestinian cause and to fighting colonialism and invasion. The Islamic Nation (*Umma*) is mentioned once in the document's fifth principle and Zionism is perceived as "a moral danger to Lebanon's future and values."[113]

On the topic of the relationship with Syria and Iran, surprisingly, neither countries were mentioned in the Founding Document, assessing hence a pure Lebanese dimension to their ideology, vision and identity.

## 4.3    Conclusion

Identity became a binding force protected by the institutions that Sadr and later on Amal created. Shiites grew stronger through these institutions, a process that permitted an easier rise to power in times of no governmental concern to the Shiites' deeds.

"The sovereignty of the motherland can not be achieved without according sovereignty to its citizens and protecting them from both political convulsions and capers and from restrictions on their free will and thought. Such sovereignty must be accompanied by a fusing together of the people in the tolerant melting pot [*butaqa*] of patriotism to produce a strong and healthy Lebanon embracing all her different cultures.[114]"

Using concepts such as sovereignty, and a melting pot, Amal asserted a new aspect to the Shiites sectarian identity on a political and social level. Advocating the embrace of different cultures and identities will pave the way to the openness of

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[113] Ibid., 20.
[114] Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shia: the Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1987), 74.

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others to the Shiites, hence getting familiar with the latter's culture and identity and vice versa. They wanted to "reconstruct Lebanon with the Maronites not in spite of them[115]" an objective attained by breaking the latter's dominance over the state's institutions for the Shiites to occupy more positions and allow smoother rise to power.

Like other Muslim groups, they identified Lebanon as an Arab state and Zionism as the enemy; re-iterating Sadr's program in the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council. They built an anti-Zionist identity that became so engrained and real in the feelings of the Shiite community and even attributed it a religious connotation by reemphasizing Sadr's assimilation of Zionism to Yazid.[116]

In sum, Mousa Sadr and Amal movement succeeded in planting the seeds of a strong Shiite identity deeply rooted in Lebanese nationalism, a specific kind of nationalism that has at its foundational beliefs in anti-Zionizm, *Jihad*, and social equality. Sadr and Amal later labored on institutionalizing the newly created identity through establishing educational institutions to propagate the new identity and embedded values, and through controlling government administration (*Majles al Janub*) that later allowed them to use government funds to alleviate the socio-economic status of their supporters. Institutionalizing identity was the way to utilize identity to access power. An increased realization of one's identity would not necessarily lead to access to power. Institutionalization of identity was the way that Amal used to bring fruition to the increased awareness of the Shiite community to its past, present, and future role. The charisma of Sadr played a significant role in starting and propagating the new identity. Amal's institutions propagated the new

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[115] Ibid., 75.

[116] Yazid the son of Mu'awiya Bin Abi Sufyan became the Khalifah in year 60 Hijri after the death of his father. He ruled for approximately five years. During the Karbala massacre he prompted for the beheading of Imam Hussein.

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identity and used the newly ingrained identity to claim more power in the national political arena.

# Chapter 5

# The Rise of Hezbollah: A New Shiite identity or New Wine in Old Bottles?

The Shiite political and identity revitalization cannot be adressed without a full analysis of the latest comer to the Lebanese Shiite political scene, Hezbollah, and the impact of the Iranian revolution.

It is the intention of this chapter to highlight the impact of Hezbollah's values and beliefs on the wider Shiite community. Such values and beliefs have undergone a significant transformation for the past thirty years. This transformation had indeed affected the Shiite identity that has been solidified earlier with the coming of Mousa Sadr.

There can be no comprehensive understanding of Shiite identity and practices in Lebanon without reference to the Iranian revolution which constitutes a significant source of ideas, practices, ideologies and support to the Lebanese Shiite community in Lebanon, specifically that part of the community that affiliates most with Hezbollah.

## 5.1    Iranian Revolution

Recognized as a chief aspect of Huntington's clash of civilizations by some or as a revolution over the prevailing socio – economic and political structures, the 1979 Iranian revolution and the consequent creation of the Islamic Republic is an upheaval over the identity and the vision attributed by the Shah to Iran.

Conducted under the banner of Islamic revival and renaissance, "the revolution drew strength from its Shiite character and attributes which lent cohesion and a sense of common purpose to disparate elements, even those that were not overtly religious at all; and from the clarity and charisma of Khomeini which (albeit temporarily for some) gave other wise disunited collection of groups and motivations a center and a unity."[117]

Ayatollah Khomeini strengthened his control through *Velayet e- Faqih (Wilayat al Faqih,* Guardianship of the Islamic jurists) whereby "day to day government should be secular, but with ultimate power in the hands of a religious leader committed to Islamic government. The constitution set up an elected presidency, an elected *Majles*[118] and elected municipal councils, but also established a council of guardians (twelve clerics and jurists) to vet and approve candidates before they could run for election, and to approve or veto legislation passed by the *Majles.* Above all it confirmed Khomeini, himself, and his successors, in the supreme position in the constitution, with the right to appoint half the members of the Guardian Council, to approve the appointment of the president, and to appoint the head of the Revolutionary Guard Corps (and the other heads of the armed forces)."[119]

Iran's constitution advocates an expansionist foreign policy calling on the export of the revolution to form a united Islamic world order. Islam needed to be revived, adopted, protected and most prominently spread to survive.

Within Iran, and in countries where the revolution succeeded to cause some change, "Shiite Islam proved to be the most viable, indigenously rooted vehicle for mobilizing an effective mass movement. It provided a sense of history an identity,

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[117] Michael Axworthy, *A history of Iran: Empire of the Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 261.
[118] Majles el Shoura el Islami is the Iranian legislative body or Parliament composed of 290 seats.
[119] Michael Axworthy, *A history of Iran: Empire of the Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 264.

common symbols and values, strong religio - political leadership, and organizational centers. Moreover, Shiite Islam offered an ideological framework that gave meaning and legitimacy to an opposition movement of the disinherited and oppressed with which a variety of factions could identify and within which they could function."[120]

Linking identity to the interests and survival of his revolution, Khomeini inadvertently adopted a constructivist approach to rise to power and to affect Shiites in other countries and consequently their rise to power in their respective states.

Islam is the identity, Shiism is the core. There is a need to spread this core identity for it to survive and not to be defeated and a need to consolidate it by the creation and support of Islamic regimes which will turn out to be Iran's allies.


### 5.1.1   The Lebanese Connection

Attaining power via identity is a phenomenon that could not find a ground more fertile than the Lebanese multi-sectarian and confessional ground.

Political life in the Middle East is one of linkage politics whereby events within one state tend to affect and spread to other surrounding countries as a regular pattern. Considering the Iranian model and from a geostrategic perspective, Arab states fall within Iran's political, security and military interests.

Iran's foreign policy in Lebanon was and still is one of active intervention since the infiltration to the Beqaa of the revolutionary guards[121]. Moreover, it was and continues to be one of propaganda through the jobs of diplomats, one of direct intervention, and one of support to militias during the war and most particularly Shiite

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[120] John L. Esposito, ed., *The Iranian Revolution: its Global Impact* (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1990), 24.

[121] There is controversy on the date the guards were dispatched to Lebanon. Some authors argue that they were sent in 1982 and others claim that they came in 1980.

ones. It also played a role in the reconstruction of postwar economy and society through financial and military assistance mainly allocated to Shiite segments.

Analyzing the divergence in interventions between Khomeini's Iran and the Shah's Iran, Dr. Kanso states that "prior to 1979, Al Najaf constituted the main Shiite religious *"Marjaa"* – *"Al Itar al Rouhi"* (Spiritual Reference). The bond existing among the Shiites and Iran under the Shah was individualistic as opposed to the current relationship of an organized community endowed with arms."[122]

"Before the establishment of the Islamic Republic, the awareness of the Lebanese Shiite society was more cultural than political. Iran managed to merge the cultural and political aspects of Shiites' belonging. A such rapport between the Iran and the Lebanese Shiites became an effective one due to political linkages."[123]

Around 500 to 1000 revolutionary guards were dispatched to Baalbeck via Syrian assistance within the earlier days of the 1982 Israeli invasion to organize the Shiite resistance. They recruited Shiites, established training camps and were active in schools propagating the revolution's doctrine. The guards thrived among young receptive people, easily influenced and impressed by new slogans and ideology.

The communication between Iran and Baalbeck occurred via the Republic's embassy in Damascus through the shipment of arms and the delivery of supplies, not to mention the continuous funding.

The rapport between Iran and Syria has not always been smooth. Differences were translated by terrible confrontations between Amal and Hezbollah, a struggle for power, vision and survival of identity. A healthier liaison with Syria which has been managing Lebanon's affairs since the seventies was vital to Iran's interests.

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[122] Dr. Wajih Kanso, interview by author, Beirut, February 26, 2010.
[123] Ibid.

Analyzing the impact of the Iranian revolution on Lebanon, Dr. Kanso argues that "it occupies an ideological form with deep theoretical foundations and a strong religious perception of power."[124]

"The disappearance of Mousa Sadr, the weak and corrupt structure of Amal along with the feeble Lebanese state intensified the impact of the Iranian revolution on Shiites in Lebanon. The individual Shiite is in constant search of recognition and belonging due to past grievances. The interplay of all these factors led to a slow but profoundly structured Shiite relation to Iran."[125]

"As to its impact on identity, the revolution induced a form of confusion among Shiites depicted trough the amplification of religious representations and symbolism. *Ashura* - fully exposed later on in this chapter - which used to be celebrated once a year is now celebrated several times a year. It too brought forth a decline in the individual margin of liberty within the Shiite realm, along with repercussions on the Shiite national identity."[126]

"The bond between the Iranian revolution and most of the Shiites now became a source of Shiite strength and a core aspect of Shiite identity. The revolution caused an enormous change in the disinherited and discriminated against Shiite individual and community be it on the societal level on or the state one. It affected his national belonging and identity and discredited all of Mousa Sadr's efforts to merge the Shiite community within the Lebanese society."[127]

Iran, the political "Vatican of Shiism", celebrated on February 11, 2010 30 years of Islamic Republic. An anniversary coronated by three major achievements rendering Iran the epicenter of a continuously boiling region. The first of these

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[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.

achievements is an increasing strong hold and an enhanced stance in the regional balances of power versus the Sunnis. The second lies in Iran's being poised to become the region's next nuclear power after Israel. And finally, the third achievement consists of having succeeded in establishing an organized political and military Shiite party and ally in Lebanon, benefiting from a Maronite legitimacy, empowered through political representation in the newly formed Hariri government and ready more than ever to fight Israel.

In addition to the impact of the Iranian revolution, the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon served as a catalyst to Hezbollah's creation. At that time, Lebanon was at the height of its civil war with foreign troops present on its soil.

## 5.2    The Rise of Hezbollah

The party emerged in 1982, but it was not until 1985 with the proclamation of the Open Letter that it became an organization based on the below three pillars as stated by Sayed Naim Qassem, a founding member of the party and its Deputy Secretary General since 1991.

> 1. Islam is the comprehensive, complete and appropriate program for a better life. It is the intellectual, religious, ideological and practical foundation for the proposed organization.
>
> 2. Resistance against Israeli occupation, which is a danger to both present and future, receives ultimate confrontation priority given the anticipated effects of such occupation on Lebanon and on the region. This necessitates the creation of *a jihad* (holy war) structure that should further this obligation, and in favour of which all capabilities are to be employed.
>
> 3. The legitimate leadership is designated to the Jurist-Theologian who is considered to be the successor to the prophets and the Imams (PBUT). The Jurist-Theologian draws the general guiding direction for the nation of Islam. His commands and proscriptions are enforceable. [128]

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[128] Naim Qassem, *Hezbollah: the Story from Within* (London: Saqi Books, 2005), 19.

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## 5.2.1  Identity

Hezbollah is a military Islamic resistance, as such the introduction of these three aspects to the Lebanese Shiite identity helped in their ultimate rise to power.

One's name is one's identity. The term Hezbollah originates from the Quran "Your friend can only be *Allah* (God), and his messenger and those who believe, who establish worship and pay the poor due and bow down [in prayer]. And whosoever taketh *Allah* and His messenger and those who believe for friends [will know that], Lo! The Party of *Allah*, they are victorious."[129] The name Hezbollah is hence present in God's words.

The Islamic name of the party de facto bestows it with a new identity aspect. The Shiites have always been persecuted and practiced a lot the Taqiya doctrine, hiding their faith and not practicing their religion publicly throughout the Arab world and in Lebanon. They gained more confidence with Mousa Sadr who too was a cleric heading an organization and who too adopted a religious approach; putting science at the disposal of religion. However, Mousa Sadr did not adopt an Islamic or sectarian nomenclature and hence the absence of sectarian connotation and identity neither in the names *Harakat al Mahrumin* and in AMAL (*Afwaj al Muqawama al Lubnaniya*).

The change with the pre-Hezbollah era started with the name of Hezbollah which is a sectarian name by excellence in a country where religious and sectarian symbols are hidden from the public by respect to the eighteen existing sects.

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[129] Ibid., 76.

For the first time in Lebanese modern history, Shiites identified themselves openly as Muslims endowed with an Islamic identity and more importantly wanted to be recognized as an Islamic group, and party by others.

Even though the party claims that its membership is open and that "practical experience proved that the name was not a predicament, it was positively perceived and easily absorbed"[130], the name of Hezbollah acted as a very attractive propaganda tool to recruit members and to amass wide popular support within the Shiite sect. The party is a sectarian party par excellence with a religious identity evident in its nomenclature.

The party's Islamic identity is also revealed in Islam being its first organizational pillar. Belief in Islam is a "conviction and a code of law."[131] Party members and affiliates have to abide by God's principles and prepare themselves to the resurrection day which is granted more importance than the earthly life of illusion. As such the party dictates and organizes its members' and constituents' daily life in every aspect.

Compliance with Islam is a must and worship is crucial as it is "the means by which the believer cultivates his personality in terms of his relationship with the lord"[132] and hence his identity. Prayer is an obligation.

Other Islamic principles include self discipline; a buffer against evil temptations, concerns for politics and economics, *Zakat* which is a social responsibility of every single Muslim, justice, piety,etc.

The party identifies itself with Islam in particular Shiism which is essential to the mobilization of supporters who will adopt the party's principles. Not only are

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[130] Ibid., 79.
[131] Ibid., 21.
[132] Ibid., 23.

these principles essential to the practice of the Islamic religion, but they also constitute a means and a tool to forge and strengthen the Islamic identity of its followers. Hezbollah maneuvers the aforementioned guidelines to align its supporters with its image, views, perceptions, objectives and identity. A single colored Shiite community modeled on Hezbollah's views serves better the Shiites' rise to power and their balance of power games against other regional and internal parties and sects.

The identity of resistance is intertwined with the concept of *Jihad*. Military Resistance is the most important activity within the party. Hezbollah members submit to *Jihad* which is the party's prime duty. *Jihad* is "endeavoring and making effort to battle against the enemy."[133] *Jihad* is that of the body and of the soul. Hezbollah fighters categorize their war against Israel under the premises of *Jihad* hence placing a religious connotation and reason for the war, assimilating Israel to Yazid. In the recruiting and training process, Hezbollah exploited the belief in this cause to mold its fighters and supporters and spread its vision of Shiite Lebanon. Reinforcement occurs in the first year of training where members are familiarized with the party's ideology and understanding of Shiism. In the second year the members are taught discipline and undergo a military training; an evident reflection of religious and military identity aspects.

The duty of each Muslim is to liberate Palestine which is an Arab and Muslim land and to fight the enemy. All resources should be employed in the confrontation of Israel.

Hezbollah is in a perpetual *Jihad* against the enemy Israel, with resistance becoming a core identity aspect and a source of pride for the Shiites. Being the only Lebanese party to possess arms and heavy artillery, it has become impossible for the

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[133] Ibid., 34.

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Shiites to isolate themselves from this source of strength and thus cannot perceive themselves or their identity away from weapons.

*Jihad* culminated in the 2000 unilateral Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon that resulted in a sentiment of pride for Shiites as they managed to achieve what no other Arab party or group had yet achieved; a "victory" free of negotiations. As such they perceived themselves and wanted to be acknowledged as great resistant fighters and conquerors; a feeling that intensified following the outcome of the 2006 war.

By positioning themselves as an Islamic resistance, they managed to win over Israel and become a highly powerful political and military party. It is a vicious circle whereby Islamic identity created and permitted an identity of resistance which in its turn facilitated the reach to power. As such one fuels the other. If the party stops being a resistance a link in this chain will be missing and rise to power and power holding will have to be achieved in another way with no recourse to identity.

Hezbollah's trajectory or rise to power would not have been the same if it did not create and succeed in cultivating new aspects to the Shiite identity in a multi-sectarian country where sectarianism breeds identity.

Hezbollah's third pillar emphasizes the jurisdiction of the *Wali al- Faqih* (Commanding Jurist), to which Hezbollah is fully committed.

### 5.2.2   Identity of *Ashura*

"The event that most shaped the ethos of the Shiite is called *Ashura*, which refers to the fate of the grandson of the prophet Imam Hussein"[134], the son of Ali.

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[134] Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 49.

Hussein travelled from Mecca to Kufa upon the invitation of the people of the latter to become their leader. "His decision to go to Kufa provoked a response from his adversary in Damascus, the Umayyad caliph Yazid, whose father Mu'awiya succeeded caliph Ali, Hussein's father as the putative ruler of all Muslims."[135]

Hussein was defeated and martyred on his way to Kufa at the hands of Yazid in Karbala on the tenth day of *Muharam*, the first month in the Muslim calendar.

Since, "*Ashura* is a time of reflection, worship and mourning"[136] on the fate of Hussein and his companions. "Hussein's martyrdom is presented as a model of courage, assertiveness and self-help"[137] and an example of sacrifice and compassion.

With its advent, Hezbollah shaped religious sensibilities drawn from *Ashura* for its own political and military ends. Hezbollah's *Ashura* processions gather "as many as a quarter of a million people"[138] in *Al-Dahyeh*, the southern suburb of Beirut, home to approximately 800 000 Shiites.

From the first day of *Muharam*, Shiites wear black and display black decorative items in their houses and streets. "The banners proclaim: Everyone is calling for Hussein; Everyday is *Ashura* and every land is Karbala; Crying for Hussein is a victory of the oppressed over the oppressor; or a variety of similar messages."[139]

Indeed every day is *Ashura* as noted by Dr. Wajih Kanso (2010). Hezbollah celebrates it several times a year through *Majaliss el Aza* (Mourning sessions/gatherings) to remind its supporters of the importance of that event in relation to their identity as Shiites.

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[135] Ibid., 50.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid., 53.
[139] Ibid., 55.

Besides its religious significance and connotation, *Ashura* is a political event whereby Hezbollah demonstrates its strength and its wide popular support. Hezbollah members march "with military precision and organized effective cordons for crowd control"[140] unlike the loosely undisciplined and unorganized Amal. The difference between the disciplined Hezbollah and the undisciplined Amal reflects on each party's constituency and accordingly on their supporter's identity , self-perception, as well as on their perception by others.

## 5.3    Institutionalization of Identity

The party's social network - mainly funded by Iran - has played a significant role in securing a safe environment for the oppressed Shiites whereby the community is able to flourish and develop further its identity, thus enabling a smoother rise to power.

### 5.3.1    *Madaress al Moustapha*

Hezbollah schools are mainly referred to as *Madaress el Moustapha* and within these schools identities are mainly forged through specific history books. It is clear though that by adopting different history books and another discourse of Lebanese modern history, Hezbollah is forging a sectarian identity rather than a national one.

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[140] Ibid., 59.

Among others, *Al Shahid* (Martyr) schools are linked to Hezbollah with approximately 4000 students registered mainly originating from martyred families.[141] Quran, religious duties and *Ashura* celebrations are taught in class and in extra curricular activities to shape the Shiite citizen. Islam is a way of living and a decisive factor in the identity formation process.

Such schools claim that they teach religion to hoist the individual and society's moral values. They do it in fact to instill a Shiite sectarian and religious identity.

### 5.3.2    *Jihad al-Bina*

The party's social initiative started in1984, two years after the party's creation. *Jihad al-Bina* was created to reduce the damages caused by Israeli attacks and to look after the southerners, mainly Shiites. It was inspired by Iran's "*Jihad Sazindagi.*"[142] Its main function was "to reconstruct and rehabilitate war-torn buildings, doing everything from repairing mosques to fixing broken toilets in public schools"[143] and to provide basic needs to people living in neglected areas.

"*Jihad al-Bina* was involved for instance in building 4,000 litter water reservoirs in each district of Beirut's southern suburbs and replenished each of them five times a day"[144] under the Aoun administration between 1988 and 1990.

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[141] Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and Making of National identities* (New York: Columbia Press University, 2008), 60.

[142] Zafar Bangash, "Leadership, Commitment and Courage: the Basis of Hizbullah's Victories over Zionists," *Crescent International*, 1-15 August 2000.

[143] Julie Goodman, "Field Hospital Mushrooms into Thriving Medical Network", *International Reporting Project of John Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies,* Fall 2004.

[144] Helena Cobban, "Hizbullah's New Face: in Search of a Muslim Democracy", *Boston Review*, April and May 2005.

Following the 2000 Israeli withdrawal the organization was active in rebuilding the formerly occupied area.

*Jihad al-Bina* also offers subsidies, scholarships, and grants to students. Furthermore "it extends its services to Hezbollah's farmers across the country, providing them with necessary fertilizers, pesticides and seeds at cost lower than market price."[145]

### 5.3.3  The Islamic Health Committee:

The Islamic Heath Committee started operating in 1984 "with a small group of doctors, nurses and paramedics who banded together to establish a field hospital for the wounded as Beirut's suburbs were besieged by militias."[146] "Today it is estimated to have five hospitals, 62 health clinics, three counseling centers, two mobile clinics, 1,300 volunteers, 650 staff members and 750 doctors, and provides service to 600,000 people per year".[147]

When Israel withdrew from the South, in 2000, the Committee started operating in the liberated areas offering medical care services and taking care of abandoned hospitals.

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[145] Nizar Hamzeh, "Lebanon's Hizbulah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary accommodation," *Third World Quarterly* 14 (1993).
[146] JoMarie Fecci, "As Hezbollah Hastens Israeli Withdrawals it Integrates Itself into South Lebanon's Economic Life," *Washington Report on Middle East*, December 1999.
[147] Ibid.

### 5.3.4 The Martyr's Foundation:

The Martyr's Foundation objective is to help the families of fallen resistance fighters and war prisoners. The foundation falls under the direct control of Iran's spiritual Leader, Khomeini, and is "one of many charitable groups established after the Iranian revolution to manage assets seized from the family and supporters of the deposed shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi".[148] Naim Qassem mentions in his book that the foundation offers shelter, schooling, clothing and health services to martyrs' children.

After describing Hezbollah's social work the thesis analyzes two major documents that shed some light on the party's political discourse and visions of Islam, the state, Zionism and the relationship with Iran and Syria: the 1985 Open Letter and the 2009 Political Manifesto. The reason that such documents are selected for analysis is that they are the sole two official documents issued by Hezbollah in the duration of 30 years. Moreover, the two documents reflect clearly the change and transformation that Hezbollah went through; the change that transformed the party from an absolutist religious party supporting the Iranian Revolution, to a Lebanese Party that looks towards defending its Lebanese homeland from Israeli aggressions.

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[148] Howard Schneider, "The Changing Face of a Militant Movement," *Washington Post*, April 5, 2000.

## 5.4    The Open Letter: 1985

On the topic of Islam, the Open Letter explicitly uses terms as Islam, Koran, the prophet... "We are an *Umma* which adheres to the message of Islam. We want all the oppressed to be able to study the divine message in order to bring justice, peace and tranquility to the world."[149] "Our culture is based on the Holy Koran, the Sunna and the legal rulings of the *Faqih* who is our source of imitation."[150] *Jihad* is an obligatory religious duty and the party's "military apparatus is not separate from the overall social fabric."[151] "And when it becomes necessary to carry out the Holy War, each of us takes up his assignment in the fight in accordance with the injunctions of the Law, and that in the framework of the mission carried out under the tutelage of the Commanding Jurist."[152]

On the topic of the Lebanese state, the letter starts by identifying Hezbollah as "the sons of the *Umma*"[153] who "obey the orders of one leader, wise and just, that of our tutor and *Faqih* who fulfils all the necessary conditions: Ruhollah Musawi Khomeini."[154] The party depicts itself as a transnational one responsible for the rights of all Muslims all over the world. "We do not constitute an organized and closed party in Lebanon"[155], "we are an *Umma* linked to the Muslims of the whole world."[156]

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[149] Hezbollah, *An Open letter: the Hezbollah Program* (1985), 3.
[150] Ibid., 1.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.

They picture themselves as a distinct community and do not mention defending the Lebanese state but rather "their religion, existence and dignity."[157] They view the Phalanges party of Lebanon as enemies and infidels. "We have no alternative but to confront aggression by sacrifice. The coordination between the Phalangists and Israel continues and develops." [158] "Our people could not bear any more treachery. It decided to oppose infidelity."[159]

Their objectives lie in expelling "the Americans, the French and their allies definitely from Lebanon"[160], in "putting an end to any colonialist entity on our land"[161], in submitting "the Phalanges to a just power and bring them all to justice for the crimes they have perpetrated against Muslims and Christians"[162] and in permitting "all the sons of our people to determine their future and to choose in all the liberty the form of government they desire."[163] Lebanon is mentioned for the first time in the third page for the purpose of serving their main interest: the creation of an Islamic state. "We call upon all of them to pick the option of Islamic Government which, alone, is capable of guaranteeing justice and liberty for all. Only an Islamic regime can stop any further tentative attempts of imperialistic infiltration into our country."[164]

The regime is perceived as "the product of arrogance so unjust that no reform or modification can remedy it. It should be changed radically."[165]

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[157] Ibid., 2.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid., 3.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.

The Open Letter directly addresses the Christians in Lebanon; "If you, Christians, cannot tolerate that Muslims share with you certain domains of government, *Allah* has also made it intolerable for Muslims to participate in an unjust regime, unjust for you and for us, in a regime which is not predicated upon the prescriptions (*ahkam*) of religion and upon the basis of the Law (the *Shari'a*) as laid down by Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets. If you search for justice, who is more just than *Allah*?" [166] The party invites Christians to "free themselves from the consequences of hateful confessionalism" [167] whether by adhering to Islam or by not taking part in any activity against them. Ironically, Hezbollah is a confessional party claiming to criticize confessionalism.

On Zionism and the Palestinian Question, Hezbollah members openly declares that they are "an *Umma* which fears God only and are by no means ready to tolerate injustice, aggression and humiliation. America, its Atlantic Pact allies, and the Zionist entity in the holy land of Palestine, attacked us and continue to do so without respite."[168] The destruction of Israel is a necessity. "This enemy is the greatest danger to our future generations and to the destiny of our lands, particularly as it glorifies the ideas of settlement and expansion, initiated in Palestine, and yearning outward to the extension of the Great Israel, from the Euphrates to the Nile."[169]

The war against Israel is the party's primary mission as the "Zionist entity is aggressive from its inception, and built on lands wrested from their owners, at the expense of the rights of the Muslim people. Therefore our struggle will end only when

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[166] Ibid., 4.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid., 1-2.
[169] Ibid., 5.

this entity is obliterated. We recognize no treaty with it, no cease fire, and no peace agreements, whether separate or consolidated."[170]

On the relationship with Iran and Syria, it is important to note that Syria is not mentioned in the document. The relationship with Iran is portrayed in the document's first paragraph on identity "the party of God (Hezbollah) the vanguard of which was made victorious by God in Iran." [171] It is also a relation of friendship and cooperation; they are in agreement "on the great and necessary objectives: destroying American hegemony in our land; putting an end to the burdensome Israeli Occupation."[172]

## 5.5    The Political Manifesto: 2009

Hezbollah's move from radicalism to incorporation in state institutions and participation in the political system is obvious through the analysis of the Open Letter and the Political Manifesto. One can notice clear differences between the Open Letter and the Political Manifesto with regards to the discourse, the structure, the terminology and the fervor etc. Hezbollah in 1985 wanted to establish *Wilayat al Faqih* in Lebanon. In 2009, the party accepted the legitimacy of the Lebanese Government and institutions and perceived itself as an integral part of the state's political activities. "The political document aims at characterizing the political vision of the party and includes its vision, stands, and ambitions." [173]

With respects to Islam, the religious discourse was more muted in the Political Manifesto  as compared to the Open Letter. *Jihad* is referred to as Hezbollah's "national, moral and religious duty to defend their land. Thus their choice was to

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[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid., 1.
[172] Ibid., 3.
[173] Hezbollah, *Hezbollah's New Political Manifesto* (2009), 1.

launch an armed popular resistance to face the Zionist danger and permanent hostility."[174] The importance of the choice of resistance and armed struggle is touched upon in "facing the enemy, liberating the land and regaining the legitimate rights."[175]

On the issue of the state, terminology referring to Lebanese state and institutions is more highlighted. Hezbollah maintains on depicting itself as a transnational actor "the resistance movements stand at the heart of international transformations and emanate as a strategic factor in the international scene after performing a central role in producing those transformations in our region."[176]

The party not only belongs to the nation - *Umma* - it is too "committed to Lebanese national benefits, having faith in its people and cherishing human values with respect to rights justice and freedom."[177]

"Lebanon is our homeland."[178] Hezbollah advocates throughout the document the need of a unified Lebanon endowed with a strong regional role. "We want Lebanon to be sovereign, free, independent, strong and competent. We also want it to be powerful, active, and present in the geopolitics of the region."[179]

Hezbollah advocates the importance of the restoration of state institutions, a just state, the application of laws on all its citizens, a right parliamentary representation based on modern election law, a state that depends on capable people despite religious beliefs, fighting administrative corruption, and a balanced development between all regions.

Political sectarianism is perceived as the chief problem impeding the development of the Lebanese political system. Sectarianism restricts the achievement

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[174] Ibid., 7.
[175] Ibid., 14.
[176] Ibid., 2.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid., 6.
[179] Ibid.

of true democracy (minority-majority rule). "Yet and until the Lebanese could achieve through their national dialogue this historic and sensitive accomplishment, which is the abrogation of political sectarianism, and since the political system in Lebanon is established on sectarian foundation, the homogenous democracy will linger the fundamental basis for governance in Lebanon, because it is the actual quintessence of the spirit of the constitution and the core of the charter of the coexistence." [180] Consociational democracy is important as it is the assurance of a true partnership between the different Lebanese sects.

On Zionism and the Palestinian question, the document states that "Israel embodies an eternal threat to Lebanon – the state and the entity – and a real hazard to the country in terms of its historical cravings in land and water especially that Lebanon is considered to be a model of coexistence" [181] in contradiction to the Zionist entity.

The Manifesto tackles the Lebanese-Palestinian relations stressing the importance of "a Lebanese- Palestinian direct dialogue"[182], on "a permission for Palestinians in Lebanon to agree on a unified reference that represents them in dialogue"[183], on "providing Palestinian refugees with their social and civilian rights, in such a way that suits their humanity, preserves their identity and cause"[184], and on the "commitment to the Right of Return and rejecting settlement."[185] Furthermore, Hezbollah supports the internal armed Palestinian resistance. Hezbollah calls on all Muslims to support and commit to the Palestinian cause.

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[180] Ibid., 8.
[181] Ibid., 6.
[182] Ibid., 9.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.

As asserted in the 1985 Open Letter, Hezbollah refuses negotiations with the state of Israel as "the method of negotiations has proven that the Zionist entity becomes more boastful and more belligerent, and that it has no intention of reaching an accord. We categorically reject any compromise with Israel or recognizing its legitimacy, this position is definitive even if everyone recognizes Israel."[186]

On the relationship with Iran and Syria, Syria unlike in the 1985 document is referred to in the text. It "stood beside us in the most difficult circumstances, and thought to unify Arab efforts to secure the interests of the region and challenges. Hence we emphasize the need to adhere to the distinguished relations between Lebanon and Syria as a common political, security, and economic need, dictated by the interest of the two countries and two people, by the imperative of geopolitics and by the requirements for Lebanese stability and facing common challenges."[187]

As for Iran it is considered as a fundamental state in the Muslim world as it "stood with courage and determination at the sight of the Arab and Islamic causes especially the Palestinian one." [188] Iran is depicted as a resistant to U.S. hegemony. As such Hezbollah pictures its relationship with Iran as one of "cooperation, brotherhood"[189], and Iran as "a center of awakening and strategic weight as well as a model for independence and liberty that supports the Arab-Islamic project."[190]

In contradiction to the Open Letter, the Political Manifesto does not at any point mention *Wilayat al Faqih* in Iran nor the project of deporting the latter to Lebanon, as a reassuring stance attesting to their integration in the Lebanese state and system.

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[186] Ibid., 13.
[187] Ibid., 10.
[188] Ibid., 11.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.

## 5.6    Conclusion

Hezbollah seems to have made a 180-degree trip which it started with calling for the establishment of an Islamic State in Lebanon and concluded in calling for strengthening the Lebanese Government institutions. Hezbollah started on different grounds from Amal. While Mousa Sadr and Amal called for a strong Lebanese state and the assimilation of the "*Mahroumin*" into this ideal state, Hezbollah called for a radical change that would culminate in an Islamic republic.

28 years of resistance, political practice and rise to power - traced in the following section - have led to the adoption of a new political rhetoric by the party of God and positioned it just next to Amal in its strategic choices and stance from Lebanese Government. In its political rhetoric, Hezbollah in 2009 looks very similar to Sadr in 1970s. The stance from Israel, Syria, and the Lebanese state come to convergence with that of Amal's.

The Shiite identity has come to fruition with this convergence. The Shiites are clear on their support of a strong and just state that provides them a significant role in the game of resource distribution at the national level. The Shiites have achieved full partnership in the political system. Hence, the Shiite community does have strong stakes in the preservation of the status-quo, the latter of which is providing it with substantive winnings at all levels of central and local government.

# Chapter 6

# Shiite Rise to Power

The Shiite rise to power can be tracked through the political evolution the community witnessed since the National Pact, passing by the Document of National Understanding more commonly know as Taif Agreement until the 2008 Doha Agreement. This section attempts to depict the Shiite rise to political power through analyzing the gains that "Political Shiism" has accumulated since the National Pact of 1943 up until the Doha Agreement of 2008.

## 6.1    National Pact

As previously discussed, the 1943 National pact of Bishara el Khoury and Riyad el Solh, which became a critical part of the Lebanese political system, failed to produce a non -sectarian political system and to take account of the socio-demographic developments that the Shiite community was witnessing.

The National Pact was perceived by many as a pact between a Maronite Leader (President of the Republic) and a Sunni leader (Prime Minister). The two parties of the Pact symbolized the power sharing formula in Lebanon. Muslims in the Pact were represented by the Sunni Prime Minister and Christians were represented by the Maronite President of the Republic. The Shiite Speaker of the House did not have much of a say in the Pact.

The 1943 unwritten pact lasted until 1975, when the Lebanese civil war broke out because of a multitude of reasons one of which was the unequal distribution of power among different Lebanese sects. The 1943 Pact could not keep up with

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demographic, military, social, and political changes that have taken place since its inception. Demography was leaning to the side of the Muslims who by 1975 counted more than Christians and they were demanding equality in representation; an equality that was elusive in the National Pact that has instated a formula of 6 to 5 ratio in all public positions including the Parliament seats, for Christians and Muslims respectively.

Another inadequacy of National Pact was the lack of Shiite power in the 1943 power-sharing formula. Mousa Sadr and later Nabih Berry of Amal movement were continuously demanding that the Shiite population be fairly represented in the political institutions and public administration.

The civil war came to an end through the ratification of the Taif Agreement by Lebanese members of parliament who were then summoned to Taif by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to put an end to civil war through an agreement addressing the political causes of the war.

## 6.2 Taif Agreement

The Taif Agreement was the outcome of the meetings. It provided for changes in the Lebanese constitution; changes that basically fine-tuned the National Pact Agreement through giving Muslims more share in the political system, a share that was supposed to be at least equal to Christian share.

Taif Agreement, that later became part of the Lebanese Constitution, shifted the Executive power away from the Maronite President of the Republic to the Council of Ministers which was now composed of 30 Ministers distributed evenly between Christians and Muslims. The Council of Ministers, that was to be presided by a Sunni

Prime Minister, became the locus of political power in post war Lebanon, thus providing the Sunni sect with more leverage in political decision-making.

In addition to a strengthened Prime Minister and Council of Ministers, the Taif Agreement strengthened the position of the Speaker of Parliament through extending the Speaker's mandate to four years, after it was one year before Taif. Moreover, the Executive Authority could not anymore dissolve the Parliament except in very exceptional and rare cases. Hence, the position of the Speaker of the House became stronger as pressure by the office of the President or the Prime Minister was decreased.

"When it came to institutions of government, it called for equal representation among Christians and Muslims in parliament essentially it wrought a change in the political structure to take account of the new power balances among the communities: the decline of the Maronites and the advance of the Sunnis and the Shiites."[191]

The implementation of the Taif Agreement turned to play into Shiite interests. As implemented, Taif allowed the Shiite Speaker of the House to become a partner in executive decision-making, through the veto power he had in the "Troika system[192]", the latter of which became the official decision-making structure in Post-Taif Lebanon. The political situation was relatively stable, permitting a better Shiite political integration and a smooth rise to power.

"After the Taif Agreement internal relations also changed. In particular the Shiites, seen as the clear winners, gained a share of power that was more proportionate to their demographic strength for the first time and in general, the

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[191] Almula Türedi, "Lebanon: at the edge of another civil war", Perceptions (Spring Summer 2008) ; 27.
[192] In the Troika system of government decisions are taken by consensus between the Speaker of parliament, the President and Prime Minister.

Muslim community as a whole benefitted from Taif at the expense of the Christians."[193]

To add to constitutional gains that the Shiite community has accumulated through Taif, the Taif Agreement stipulated the dissolving of all Lebanese militias with the exception of Hezbollah which was to be considered a Lebanese resistance movement benefiting form the usage of arms in order to protect the Lebanese soil from Israeli invasions. Accordingly, Hezbollah's power was increased and it rise to power facilitated.

## 6.3    External Influences

In addition to the contributions of Taif to Shiite rise to power in Lebanon, both Iran and Syria played a crucial role. Iran's military and economic support to Hezbollah strengthened the party within the Shiite realm and in the different internal and regional balances of power. The party also benefitted from Syrian backing on both political and military levels. Politically Syria was the architect of the agreement that increased Shiite political representation. Militarily, weapons and funds were allocated from Iran through Syrian assistance.

It is important to note at this stage that Syria purposely increased the military power of the party to use it as a tool in its proxy war against Israel. Prior to 1989, Syria was more closely associated to Amal. Following the civil war Syria maintained a good relationship with both Shiite movements.

The Taif Agreement ended what many described as "Political Maronism". It is argued by many that a new structure of Political Sunnism and Political Shiism were

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[193] Almula Türedi, "Lebanon: at the edge of another civil war", Perceptions (Spring Summer 2008) ; 28.

on the rise, both benefiting from the inflated role of Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia in Lebanese politics.

"The Shiite community through this "Political Shiism" gained tremendous political, economic and military power and assumed command (with the blessing of the Syrian occupation) over critical Lebanese institutions such as the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Security General, Agriculture, Youth and Sports, etc..."[194] In addition, and through the same distribution of Grade I positions among sects, Amal and Hezbollah came to nominate the Director of Security General, one of the most influential security organizations in the Lebanese public sector.

## 6.4    The Resistance Factor:

Shiite power in the political system was further consolidated through its monopoly of resistance to Israel. Hezbollah and Amal movement proposed working along "a dual path: the one of resistance and liberation without subjugating to the negotiation channel, and the other being the political path followed by the government in pursuit of the implementation of UN resolution 425, which called for Israel's complete withdrawal from Lebanon." [195]

The 2000 Israeli unilateral withdrawal from the South of Lebanon constitutes a landmark in Hezbollah's history and rise to power as the party became an important transnational actor with a foreign policy watched more than that of the Lebanese state. After the liberation of Southern Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah's legitimacy as the only Arab force that could defeat Israel was enhanced, and the party went on strengthening

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[194] Center for Democracy in Lebanon, "The Shiites versus Lebanon: A Strategic Plan or a Case of Misunderstanding", http://www.democracyinlebanon.org/Documents/CDL-Exclusives/PDF/DonQuixote(1-15-06).pdf
[195] Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah: the Story from Within* (London: Saqi Books, 2005), 107.

its military, political and social institutions as a precondition for winning the war to come.

Hezbollah's power was further consolidated after 2006 Israeli war against Lebanon. The party fought the Israeli Army for 33 days, and it went out of the war with a relatively intact military structure. The war of 2006 presented Hezbollah and Amal as the parties representing the "resistance" in Lebanon. To add legitimacy to the logic of resistance, the Christian Free Patriotic Movement lead by General Michel Aoun endorsed the resistance argument to add a national dimension to Lebanese resistance and to provide Hezbollah critical access to Christian public opinion. The alliance with Free Patriotic Movement further strengthened Hezbollah's national stand, and allowed the party to engage in political battles in locations that were long thought of as Christian political strongholds where Shiite politics has no foot step.

## 6.5    Assassination of PM Hariri and Consequent Doha Agreement:

"The 14 February 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri – preceded by the decision to extend President Emile Lahoud's term – set off a chain reaction of local and regional events that began with the rapid withdrawal of Syrian troops, proceeded with elections and the formation of a new government"[196], and ending with Doha Agreement.

The assassination triggered Hezbollah's first ministerial participation. Hezbollah decided to become part of the government because of national unity considerations. Hezbollah perceived its participation as a means to protect its weapons through a National Unity Government, after the assassination of Hariri led to strong

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[196] International Crisis Group, " Lebanon: Managing the gathering storm" (2005), 1.

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anti-resistance and anti-Syrian feelings that eventually culminated with the withdrawal of the Syrian Army from Lebanon.

The participation of Hezbollah in a National Unity Government, shoulder to shoulder with Amal ministers, could be seen as one step further in the way of rise to political power, a rise that would have not been possible without the accompanying formation of a solid and clear identity and without the consequent institutionalization of this identity, both of which were necessary though not sufficient conditions for the rise to power.

Tensions between the Hariri block and its allies on one hand and Hezbollah and Amal movement on the other hand, specifically related to the international tribunal on the assassination of MP Hariri, led to the withdrawal of Hezbollah and Amal from the government, and their organizing of the longest sit-in in the history of the Lebanese Republic in downtown Beirut. Increased tensions between the two blocks – resulting in increased tensions between Sunnis and Shiites - led to an armed confrontation in Beirut (May 7th, 2008). The clashes were ended only by led to the Doha Agreement sponsored by the Emir of Qatar in May 2008.

The Doha Agreement, although not a constitutional text on its own, has regulated political life since its inception. The Agreement called for:"forming a national unity government composed of 30 ministers distributed among the majority (16 ministers), the opposition (11 ministers) and the president (3 ministers), and by virtue of this agreement, all parties commit not to resign or obstruct the government's actions". [197]

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[197] Full Text of the Doha Agreement, May 2008.

The direct implications of the text above-mentioned were the call for a unity government while giving up the majority a third plus one of the total seats within the Cabinet. The Agreement stipulated that governments to come should be Unity Governments, meaning that there can be no cabinet formed in Lebanon without the consent of the Shiite duet Amal and Hezbollah.

The Doha Agreement constitutes the last step in the Shiite rise to power, a path that started accumulating achievements since 1970s, when Mousa Sadr started lobbying for the Shiite access to power.

The comparison between National Pact, Lebanese 1926 Constitution, Taif Agreement and amendments to constitution in 1989, and Doha Agreement reveals an advent of Shiite power within the Lebanese political decision-making institutions and process.

# Chapter 7

# Conclusion

The failure of realist and pluralist academics to predict and understand the unipolar system that emerged at the end of the cold war along with the emergence of a new generation of scholars\ adopting a critical approach to the understanding of international relations provoked the rise of the new constructivist school of thought.

Still, compared to realism and pluralism; constructivism is much more of an approach constantly elaborated and rearticulated than a fully-fledged theory. Various constructivist underlining principles borrow ideas from psychological, sociological and philosophical perspectives to understand and analyze the importance of identity construction, how identities condition interests, along with the impact of material and normative structures on the identity-formation process.

Perceived as the most prominent constructivist scholar, Alexander Wendt fails to include the level of domestic politics in his study of constructivism, solely focusing on identity relations between state - entities. Wendt fails to account for the importance of balances of power between the different identity groups within the Lebanese political realm, balances of power that majorly influence the actions/behavior of one identity group vis a vis a the other groups or sects. Constructivism will have to continue to elaborate its own contributions to intra-state identity interactions.

On another note, by asserting that norms enjoy a binding moral force that shapes the actor's behavior and actions, constructivism fails to address cases where the aforementioned norms have been abused to justify the actors' behavior as in May 2008, where Shiites endangered established norms to protect their identity and

interests. It is true that norms affect actors' behavior however, perception and imagination largely influence actions and approaches, accordingly the lack of information and anarchy for instance greatly influence the interactions between different identity groups and accordingly their behavior.

Furthermore, by focusing on rules and norms, constructivists tend to ignore the contributions of embodied social structures to world politics and international relations.

This thesis tried to chart the formation of Shiite socio-political identity and the accompanying growth of the community's power. Through its two main political parties, the Shiite community has developed a core identity that explains its vision of the Lebanese state, its role in decision-making process, its relationship with Syria and Iran, and its perception of *Jihad* against Israel and consequent political behavior.

The thesis has argued that the formation of a dominant "Shiite identity" and the institutionalization of this identity has facilitated Shiite advent to power. Added to the formation and consolidation of identity, external factors such as Iranian support, Syrian support, and confrontation with Israel have further strengthened the two parties and provided them with additional institutional power.

It should be noted, however, that Shiite identity has not been uniformly constructed through a unified set of ideas and conceptions. The elements of modern Shiite identity started coming to life through Mousa Sadr's secular vision of the Lebanese state, modified through Hezbollah's vision of a religious state, and then later unified through Hezbollah adopting Sadr's socio-political approach as evident in Hezbollah's latest Political Manifesto announced in 2009.

And while Amal has been opted to becoming a part of the Lebanese Cabinet since 1970s, Hezbollah became a part of government only in 2005, after the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri.

Through using a constructivist approach to analyze the Shiite rise to political power, it becomes clear that the formation of identity was a primordial driver in the Shiite ascension to the highest echelons of the Lebanese power ladder. Although other factors related to external support and confrontation with Israel also count, identity renewal and institutionalization played the major role in catalyzing the Shiite transition from a state of ideological dissonance between Amal and Hezbollah bound by the quest to end unjust Shiite political representation, to a state of unmatched Shiite power buoyed by Hezbollah's influence and military dominance, yet pragmatically characterized by a Shiite ideological reversion back to Mousa Sadr's nationally unifying and moderate rhetoric.

Constructivism is a must in the study of Shiites rise to power in Lebanon as identities and interests are realities in the complex system that took place following the 1989 Taef Accords. In half a century Shiites succeeded in becoming the most organized political Lebanese phenomenon in a country of lost identity, where religion is a tool constantly used and abused for political ends, where fear from the other is a constant apprehension and where all means sound plausible for survival.

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