

Religion in Hizbullah's Political Strategy

Mariam Farida

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Macquarie University
Department of Security Studies and Criminology

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to conduct a multidisciplinary investigation of the role and function of religion in Hizbullah's political strategy. In turn, the investigation has been undertaken in the context of contemporary security studies and terrorism studies, with consideration also given to International Relations Theory and Social Mobilisation Theory. The rationale for this investigation emerged from the belief that, as a non-state actor, Hizbullah's use of religion represents an important and interesting case regarding the relationship between religion and security studies contextualised around Lebanese domestic politics primarily and regional politics more broadly. The design of this study combines quantitative research paradigms with rich description. A thematic analysis of Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah's speeches from 2000 to 2013 was conducted to examine how religious principles and tools were 'contextualised' by the speaker to serve Hizbullah's political agenda. This included how religious rhetoric was employed by the Party to sustain its culture of resistance. This study found that Hizbullah's use of religious rhetoric in its Party speeches and application of religious tools in its decision making supported its turn to political pragmatism and its capacity to act as a rational non-state group. Thus, the Party should not simply be deemed as a guerrilla or terrorist organisation. This finding is significant for our understanding of the concepts and issues in security and terrorism studies. This finding is also important as it highlights the use of religion by Hizbullah as a non-state actor to pursue a pragmatic approach to political and resistance action-taking and to justify actions or to mobilise populations to facilitate social change.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed)____Mariam Farida_____ Date: __17/3/2018_____

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List of names

Hizbullah: different scholars have adopted different spellings of the word Hizbullah, such as: Hezbollah, Hizballah, and Hizbollah. However, for this thesis, the author adopted the spelling of the word as “Hizbullah”.

Shi’ite: The spelling of the word Shi’ite is closely related to the Arabic pronunciation, and while there might be varied ways offered such as Shiite and/or Shi’té, however in this thesis the spelling “Shi’ite” will be used.

Shi’ism: similar to the use of the spelling “Shi’ite”, the author will be using the same spelling in reference to Shi’ism- the ideology of Shi’ites.

Taklif Shari: in reference to an assigned religious command, Shari translates to: legitimate (in Islamic legislation).

Shari’a: in reference to religious law. While Shari and Shari’a are derived from the same wording in Arabic- Shar’i (legality), however the author adopted the terms differently.

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The history of Lebanon is laden with war, violence and fragmentation. Since gaining its independence in 1943, the country has established a unique political system titled 'confessionalism', which entails a power-sharing arrangement based on religious communities. Despite the attempt at power-sharing, the country has experienced ongoing civil conflict for the past 15 years arising from religious differences combined with economic and political instability. Even 30 years after the civil war, Lebanese people still suffer from political and social segregation, and a stalemate among politicians. Lebanese Shi'ite communities are mostly concentrated in rural areas – particularly in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa areas – and they experience greater poverty relative to other communities. Indeed, they received little attention from the Lebanese government until Shi'ite leaders such as Musa Al-Sadr, and later Hizbullah, drew attention to their plight. Most residents in these areas reached out to the *zo'ama* (local leader) or *Ulama* (local cleric) to have their social needs met (Traboulsi 2007: 43-47). Since the Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanon in 1982 however, Lebanon's Shi'a began to assert themselves, including at the political level.

Hizbullah, or Party of God, initially emerged as an armed militia to free the southern parts of Lebanon from foreign occupation and to improve Shi'ite standing in Lebanon. The Party has subsequently presented itself as a legitimate political party. In May 2011, Sayyed Nasrallah, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, declared that "Hizbullah is a resistance movement that aims at liberating the occupied territories and is not a substitute for the government".¹ This statement was intended to assure the Lebanese people of the Party's intentions; however, the nature of Hizbullah still provokes great controversy today. Some Western governments have labelled Hizbullah's armed wing a

¹ Archive: Almanar TV Website (2011) Sayyed Nasrallah's full speech on May 25, available at: <http://archive.almanar.com.lb/english/article.php?id=17623> (accessed 15 February 2015).

terrorist organisation, but most Arab States, and Lebanon particularly, continue to describe it as a legitimate resistance movement (Dionigi 2014).

Hizbullah presents as a unique case study in an investigation of the complex relationship between religion and security in the Middle East context, particularly in Lebanon. The uniqueness of the Party is most reflected in its ability to successfully operate across multiple domains; namely, the civilian (*da'wa*) context of social welfare and religious education; as a military-resistance organisation (*jihad*), and as a key player in the Lebanese political system (Azani 2013: 899-900). In addition, Hizbullah is unique in the sense that it has proved to be extremely competent in its ability to downplay its application of religious ideals and principles while emerging as a prototypical hybrid militant-political organisation in domestic and regional *jihad* movements.

This thesis analyses Hizbullah's emergent role in Lebanese politics from the perspective of its use of religion to develop the Party's identity. Focus is given to Hizbullah's uses of religious mechanisms such as *taklif shari* (religious assessment), *ijtihad* (interpretation) of *jihad*, and *fatwa* (religious verdict) as political tools to mobilise the Shi'ite community, build political support, and to introduce its *infatih* (opening) and Lebanonisation initiative. Lebanonisation is the term often used to explain the Party's integration into Lebanese politics, beginning with its participation in the parliamentary elections in 1992 up to the Party's consolidated role in government. As such, the Lebanonisation process is believed to have laid the platform for Hizbullah to represent itself as a national party (Harb and Leenders 2005). A key goal of this thesis is to explore the importance of political pragmatism as a platform for Hizbullah to achieve its political objective as a dominant political player in Lebanon. To that purpose, specific attention is given to the interconnection between Hizbullah's religious and political identifiers to answer the primary research question: How does Hizbullah use religion to its political advantage?

The main argument developed in this thesis is that Hizbullah uses its religious origins and inspiration to promote unity within the Shi'a community in Lebanon, and to maintain its dominant position in the Shi'ite community. It will further be argued that the Party is pragmatic in its reliance on religious precepts. As a result, strongly held religious principles are not allowed to impede the Party's pursuit of its objectives to seek community, national, and regional political dominance.

1.2 Research Premise

The research conducted for this thesis explores the elements of religion in Hizbullah's identity and policies, and the implications of that relationship for the Party's decision making. Hizbullah's identity is influenced by its commitment to the *Welayet al-Faqih* doctrine. This doctrine, first adopted by Iran following the Iranian Revolution in 1979, is a concept of governance at the centre of contemporary Shi'a politics that advocates a guardianship-based system of politics (Ali 2017: 175-177). That is, the *Welayet al-Faqih* doctrine endorses the installation of a just and expert jurist (*faqih*) to lead the government in the absence of an infallible Imam. Although there is some debate among Shi'ite communities as to the *exact* nature of the jurist's role and scope of authority, guardianship by a highly-ranked religious scholar is endorsed in all Shi'a theories of governance (Ali 2017).

Although Hizbullah has successfully presented itself as a prominent political party in Lebanon, it is nonetheless still formally committed to an ideology positioned within a religious framework and continues to insist on its religious character. Therefore, this research aims to investigate Hizbullah's attempts to conserve its religiosity using religious instruments (as mentioned above), despite its political development and the Party's command structure. Thus, following the primary question stated above, the research sub-question(s) are: What role has religion played in Hizbullah's political development since its creation in 1983 (specifically through Shi'ite analogy and *ijtihad*)? To what extent is Hizbullah using religion and what implications does it bear?

1.3 Why Hizbullah?

Hizbullah is depicted by the West and more recently by the Arab League as a terrorist organisation with a specific intent (along with Iran) to destabilise the Middle East region (Sabah and Noueihed 2017). Notwithstanding the clear ideological platforms that underpin such claims, Hizbullah remains an important and interesting case for examination regarding the relationship between religion and security studies for three main reasons. First, this research focuses on Hizbullah because of its apparent commitment to a religious framework despite its political development as a legitimate player in Lebanese politics. From 1982 to the present, the Party has positioned itself as a legitimate and arguably the only effective resistance group to Israel – in response to the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon – and has successfully integrated into Lebanese politics (first joining the Lebanese parliament, and then the government). Hizbullah is however a political group based on a platform of Islamic social and political ideology. Indeed, Hizbullah has retained its religious identity and does not shy away from its intellectual and ideological commitment to the *Welayet al-Faqih* doctrine.

Second, Hizbullah presents a religious *and* a politically pragmatic face, and as such there is a uniqueness and an element of ‘uncertainty’ about the Party that is worthy of deeper analysis. It is argued by scholars such as Saad-Ghorayeb (2002), Harb and Leenders (2005), and Norton (2007) that the formation of Hizbullah was the result of two main factors: the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and the continuing under-representation of the Muslim Shi’ite community in the Lebanese political system. After years of guerrilla warfare, Hizbullah was finally able to achieve a major political and military milestone in the country’s struggle against Israel with the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon in May 2000. Since then, the organisation has thrived.

There exists a wide funding network that supports Hizbullah’s position and ensures its continuity within Lebanese society. Sources of funding include *zakat* (Islamic alms), financial support from its ally, Iran, and donations from wealthy

Lebanese businessmen and women abroad. Through the funds the Party receives, it has established a dynamic social program and manages a nationwide network of social, educational and charitable programs. These efforts, in addition to the long struggle against Israel, have helped Hizbullah gain the support of a wide sector of the Lebanese population, specifically, but not exclusively, the Muslim Shi'ite sect. Hizbullah has also gained recognition amongst some segments of society as the strongest political force in the country (Khatib 2014: 105- 111).

The unity of Hizbullah members is tied to the Shi'ite sect. The Shi'ite community's faith and belief in the guiding mission of the Party has therefore helped it to grow stronger. Furthermore, Hizbullah has positioned itself as the only group capable of fighting the ongoing threat that Israel poses to Lebanon. Initially, Hizbullah did not need propaganda tools to attract members, as its target and mission were widely recognised as being to free Lebanese lands from foreign occupation. This had been enough to attract large numbers of young Shi'ites to join the organisation (Norton 2005). However, Hizbullah's formal recruitment strategy is a key to its success. During the 1980s, recruitment was relatively simple since the country was at war. Nevertheless, Hizbullah's leaders were careful to choose the 'right' people who were driven by their commitment and who had a comprehensive understanding of the mission, in addition to the *Welayet al-Faqih* doctrine.²

Hizbullah's entry into the Lebanese parliament and its emergence as a political party has embedded it into the fabric Lebanese society. Hizbullah has proven, during its 30 years of existence, that it is able to maintain a solid organisational structure. Moreover, it will be argued that Hizbullah's continued ability to integrate into Lebanese politics stems from a religious pragmatism that resides in Shi'ite theology (see Chapters Five and Six). Specifically, the Shi'ite

² *Welayet El-Faqih*, rule of the Clerics, initiated by Khomeini during the Iranian revolution in 1979, which constitutes the recognition of the absolute and supranational political and religious authority of the Supreme Guide, the *Wali el-Faqih*.

endorsement of *taqiyya*³ to protect oneself facilitates Hizbullah's use of religious tools such as *ijtihad* and *fatwa* to consolidate its position in the Lebanese political system via political pragmatism. As such, the way in which the Party utilises *ijtihad* to exercise independent judgment and to formulate new interpretations of Islamic principles to build political capital is examined in this thesis.

Third, Hizbullah can be considered as another guerrilla movement that has successfully transformed into a political party. In some cases, such movements come to dominate the state's post-independence political system.⁴ In this context, the key question to be considered is: How does Hizbullah's use of religion influence its political decision making? The answer to this question and the level of pragmatism that Hizbullah demonstrates will provide some indication of whether the Party will play by the rules of the Lebanese political system. The underlying assumption in this thesis is that Hizbullah uses religion to achieve its political ends at both the domestic and regional level. Indeed, this thesis considers Hizbullah to be a party which exemplifies how religion can influence politics.

The extent and nature of Hizbullah's employment of religion for its political gain is analysed through an examination of specific dates and developments that shaped the Party's religio-political identity. There are extensive analyses of the Party's religion/sectarian rhetoric to explain three major political decisions particularly (Harik 2004; Hamzeh 2004; Khatib 2013). First, there were the 1992 decisions to take part in the parliamentary elections in Lebanon which shifted the Party's identity from resistance group to legitimate political party. Second, there were the events of 2005 and 2006; namely, the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri, and the war with Israel in 2006. This latter event

³ 'Quietism' (*Taqiyya*) and 'Activism' are two broad political traditions of Islam. Political quietism is generally understood as the religiously motivated retreat from political matters. The quietist tradition may be adopted when one accepts that it is forbidden to rebel against a Muslim ruler or when one seeks to protect oneself from danger. For instance, it was an approach adopted by Shi'ite Muslims to protect themselves from continuous persecution.

⁴ Such as the case of Mozambique Liberation Front, FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique).
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represents a milestone in Hizbullah's emergence as a political party as it faced the dilemma of potentially having to compromise its regional position and alliances to become a national Party. Third, there were the clashes of 2008 with the Future Movement (see Chapter Four) which presented similar challenges to Hizbullah's domestic position and popularity. Importantly, these three focus points are re-visited throughout the thesis as each contributes to the in-depth analysis of how Hizbullah justified, reasoned and strengthened its political presence in Lebanon amidst these setbacks, and how religion (specifically Shi'ite rhetoric) has been instrumental in this outcome.

Furthermore, a focus in this thesis responds to accusations and questions surrounding Hizbullah's loyalty and transparency. As part of its secretive nature, Hizbullah has adopted a strategy of 'reveal and hide'. This, in Hizbullah's perspective, is essential for its survival in the face of continuous threats from Israel. However, this strategy has led to accusations against the Party that it is deceptive and untrustworthy (Khatib 2013). For example, Hizbullah was criticised by the March 14 bloc for using its weapons against Lebanese citizens and as a tool to pressure the Lebanese government during the 2008 clashes in Beirut (see Chapter Five). On this point, this research examines Hizbullah's 'reveal and hide' strategy in relation to the use of religious commands, and how it is appropriated within Islamic scripts as an applied principle.

1.4 Contextualising the Research within the Social Sciences

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the role and function of religion in Hizbullah's political strategy. In turn, the investigation has foremost been undertaken in the context of contemporary security studies and terrorism studies. The examination of religion in the field of security studies generally emerges from the premise that States (and non-state actors) engage in conflict for ideational/cultural reasons which are separate to (or possibly in combination with) material reasons. As stated by Patterson (2012: 117-118), "there are many ways that religion can foster or exacerbate conflict" including individuals' uses of religious justifications for violence, when religious actors claim the authority

to prescribe violence (including killing), when religious texts mandate violence, or when a religion makes sacred something tangible, resulting in a spiritual obligation to protect it. This thesis aims to explore how these elements of the relationship between religion and conflict manifest in the political rhetoric underpinning the military, political and social actions of Hizbullah in the 21st century.

In terms of terrorism studies, the interest in this thesis is primarily on current explanations of insurgent terrorism and their applicability to Hizbullah as an insurgent non-state actor in Lebanon and the Middle East region more broadly. As such, it explores the associations between the Party and the notion of embedded terrorism “as a form of asymmetrical conflict” (McAllister and Schmid 2011: 241). That is, conflict that typically relies on structured uses of communication, transportation and weapons technologies to overcome adversaries and to achieve a socio-political agenda.

In addition, the politicised use of religion in State affairs is likened by Gorski and Türkmen-Dervis,oglu (2012: 140) to a type of social movement that claims to speak in the name of the group and which defines the group in terms of religion. While this thesis adopts a multidisciplinary approach to understanding Hizbullah and its use of religion for political advantage, it is also worthwhile to briefly touch upon Social Mobilisation Theory given that much of the literature on Hizbullah seeks, at least in part, to explain the Party from this theoretical perspective. As described by Klandermans (2013: 12), “social mobilization is the mechanism that brings demand and supply of protest together”. The theory may therefore be used to explain the reasons for social mobilisation, how it manifests, and its potential to achieve social, cultural, and political outcomes (Christiansen 2009: 1). It is not within the scope of this thesis to examine how Hizbullah mobilises its members and community networks through the lens of Social Mobilisation Theory particularly. Nonetheless, it does consider aspects of the theory at times to explore or explain the way in which Hizbullah mobilises its

members within the context of contentious politics as a form of socio-political protest.

Lastly, International Relations theories have remained largely silent, or at least divided, on the significance assigned to religion (or religious traditions) as a driver of international relations. However, the increasing agency of non-state actors such as Hizbullah in contemporary international politics presents a clear challenge to assertions in IR theory that the arena of international politics is shaped only by sovereign government actions (Acharya 2014: 651). It is not within the scope of this thesis to examine the weaknesses in IR theory to adequately account for religion as a driving force of state action. Rather, the focus is on Hizbullah's use of religion in a political context. The rationale for this focus stems from questions concerning the Party's role in Lebanese and regional politics. That is, the Party's participation in domestic politics in combination with the nature of its regional relations bring into question the extent to which it can be considered as a resistance movement only (Szekely 2016: 75).

Hizbullah's success as a non-state actor has largely relied on its ability to operate under a dualistic ideology; namely nationalism and transnational Islamism⁵ (Kramer 1994: 39). Moreover, the assumptions typically applied in IR theory to non-state actors (i.e. a preoccupation with local conflicts, regime change etc.) – while evident in Hizbullah's actions as a resistance movement – do not adequately apply to its role in domestic and regional politics. Furthermore, while much of what has been written about Hizbullah has focused on identity politics (Jones 2001; Kahler 2009; Kalyvas 2001; George et al. 2012), assigning focus to religion in Hizbullah's political action taking will build on the work of scholars such as Fox and Sandler (2004), Khashan and Moussawi (2007) and Philpot et al. (2011) who have argued that religion is a major player in 21st century politics. In fact, Philpot et al. (2011) have referred to the 21st century as "God's century".

⁵ A political ideology that instrumentalises Islam.
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Hizbullah thus presents a unique and interesting case study of the nexus between religion and politics, particularly how the Party may utilise religious tools to pursue a pragmatic political platform to strengthen its power base in Lebanon. The religious tools in question include the exclusive use of *taklif shari*, a religious command that can be neither negotiated nor declined, and which may only be used by the Party leader (i.e. Hassan Nasrallah). The use of this tool exemplifies how a religious concept can be employed for political purposes. Indeed, *taklif shari* was used to mobilise fighters in the 2006 war with Israel, to fight in Syria in 2013, and to encourage people to vote in the parliamentary elections (as will be explored throughout the thesis).

There is little information available in the literature to elucidate Hizbullah's employment of *taklif shari* and its importance to the Party's success. Therefore, a gap exists in our academic understanding of the way in which Hizbullah utilises religious belief structures as tools to pursue its political objectives. This thesis attempts to fill this gap by examining the extent to which concepts derived from Islamic studies can be utilised to elucidate how Hizbullah used religion for political purposes. During the examination, a discussion of the Christian equivalent to *ijtihad*, 'casuistry', is provided to elaborate on and/or to clarify specific points of interest. Casuistry is described as the application of reasoning to interpret and explain cases of conscience or moral conduct (Kirk 1999). Interestingly, the literal translation of casuistry into Arabic is *fatwa*; the process of interpreting a religious text to accommodate or explain modern day situations or 'cases', and then applying this interpretation as a standard rule. Indeed, casuistry is prevalent in many Islamic interpretations of the Qur'an (Roy 2004; Robin 2010) and is also applied through different sects, specifically the Shi'ite sect.

Herein lies the element of religion in the analysis of the actions of Hizbullah. *Fatwa* is an applied notion in the Islamic tradition and, as this thesis shows, is widely used as a progressive religious idea in Islamic discourse in specific social, political and economic cases. The link between *fatwa* (and *ijtihad*) and Hizbullah's

political pragmatism is thus explored in this thesis in relation to the notion of '(re)interpretation'. Hizbullah is confronted with constantly changing political and social conditions in Lebanon and the region more broadly. In turn, *ijtihad* as a reasoning process can be applied by Hizbullah to case-specific circumstances when issuing a *fatwa* while still maintaining the centrality of core Islamic principles (Cook 2000: 103-110). The *fatwa* (based on this reasoning) thus enables the Party to maintain its identity as a staunchly religious movement while also adopting a pragmatic approach to decision making and action taking (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002: 70-75).

The interpretation of Islamic principles in case specific situations may thus serve both political and religious objectives. Muslims can be mobilised to act according to religious principles, and a response to changing circumstances can be pursued by Hizbullah that will potentially strengthen its political position (Cook 2000: 103-110). That is, the scope for interpretation facilitates political pragmatism because it allows the religious understanding of the prevailing circumstances to be framed within a response that can take advantage of political opportunities (Hamzeh 2004).

1.5 Methodology

This study applied an investigative study design to examine the use of religion in Hizbullah politics. Notably, it is broadly acknowledged that conducting research on non-state actors is different from typical Social Science or Political Science research in that the focus is on insurgent or underground organisations and therefore gaining access to, and proving authorship of, relevant and rich data is highly challenging (Schmid 2011a). As such, the data collection processes undertaken by researchers have often been based on stories from the new media and government reports, "both often not very reliable" (Schmid 2011b: 461). However, in this present study of Hizbullah's use of religion to progress its political agenda, the investigative process relies on the comparative analysis of primary documents; namely, speeches of Hizbullah Secretary-General, Hassan Nasrallah, from 2000 to 2013 (101 speeches and interviews). The rationale for

focusing on his speeches and interview responses is that they collectively offer an authentic and authoritative voice on the religious, social and political agendas of Hizbullah given Nasrallah's position as Secretary-General and role as high commander of the Party. In turn, as stated by (Schmid 2011b: 462), "comparative in nature and covering prolonged campaigns" is more likely to produce original findings. The study initially started with a methodology that was framed with interviewing Hizbullah figures in order to gather credible information from the Party officials. However, due to the start of the Syrian war, the Party denied access to researchers for interviews. For this reason, the methodology had then shifted to document analysis. The inability of obtaining interview access with Party officials can be considered as a limitation as the study could have benefited from the credible information gathered from Hizbullah.

Nasrallah is considered the spokesperson of Hizbullah, with his speeches reflecting the Party's political and policy position. Furthermore, Nasrallah's credibility as a leader of Shi'ite Muslims particularly stems from his religious status, being a *Sayyid*⁶. Nasrallah usually delivers his speeches during certain religious commemorations and ideological celebrations such as the start of fasting (Ramadan), *Ashoura*⁷ commemoration, and Al-Quds (Jerusalem) day. The speeches are often televised events, but Nasrallah also – albeit rarely for security reasons – appears in person at Party events. Notwithstanding that his speeches generally take place during religious celebrations, they still convey political messages.

Data analysis involved a thematic analysis of Nasrallah's speeches. Secondary resources such as journals and newspaper articles were also used to support the research investigation. The objective of the thematic analysis was to elucidate the use of religion in Nasrallah's political and social statements (i.e. his speeches) to demonstrate how this use shapes Hizbullah decision-making and action-taking.

⁶ Descendants of the Prophet's blood line.

⁷ Ashoura is a remembrance and commemoration of the death of Imam Hussein and a recounting of the events that took place during the battle of Karbala.

As such, the thematic analysis sought to establish the existence of narrative patterns in Nasrallah's speeches. Towards this outcome, both temporal (years 2000-2013) and contextual variables (type of event) were included in the analysis, and various themes and codes were developed in accordance with the abovementioned research questions and hypotheses. The following definitions of a theme and a code were employed in this process:

- "A theme is an idea that captures something important about the data in relation to the research question that represents a pattern in responses" (Braun & Clarke 2006: 80).
- Code: "shorthand labels - usually a word, short phrase, or metaphor - often derived from the participants' accounts, which are assigned to data fragments defined as having some common meaning or relationship" (Carpenter & Suto 2008: 49).

The themes (and some of the most used codes) used in this study were:

- Community development (*jihad* of: family / women / wives / mothers / education / children; hunger; deprivation; healthcare; poverty; *Jihad* al-Bina (community engagement through reconstruction); reconstruction; Waad Project⁸)
- Humour
- Language of fear and threat (destroy Lebanon; crush Hizbullah; threats against Lebanon; Hizbullah as only protector)
- Lebanese nationalism and unity (unity: Christians and Muslims - Sunni and Shi'a; anti-sectarian; Lebanese army; confessions; religions)
- Oppressed vs Oppressors
- Pragmatism based on quietism (quiet; restraint; patient; calm; rejecting conflict/revenge)
- Religion and enemy (Jewish; apostate; infidel; devil; Satan; enemy of God)

⁸ This was the initiative of the reconstruction projects that followed Hizbullah-Israel war in 2006. Hizbullah went through a fullscale reconstruction of the destroyed houses. This was titled Waad project-the promised project.

- Religion and international alliances (Arab and Islamic nation; One billion people; Islamic Revolution; Middle East - unity: Christians and Muslims; Muslim world; Arab and Islamic region)
- Ally of Syria
- Hizbullah-Iran relationship (friend of, support from: Iran / Khomeini / Khamenei / Islamic Republic)
- Shi'a party (Shrines; Pilgrims)
- Support for Palestine (Quds; Al-Aqsa; Palestinians: Christians and Muslims)
- Religion and resistance (God / Almighty / Karbala: resistance; *Moqawama*⁹; Islamic resistance; *Jihad*).
- Religion and storytelling (Hussein; Ali; Karbala; Khomeini's life; Musa al Sadr's life)
- Religion and Victory (God / Almighty / Karbala: victory).
- *Welayet al-Faqih*

The data analysis method adopted in this thesis contributes to our academic understanding of the nexus between the religious and the political in Hizbullah's ideology by identifying how the nexus is given expression by the Party leader. As such, it extends on previous research examining the Party's ideology such as the thematic analysis of Hizbullah's political press releases, the open letter in 1985, and the Party 2009 Political Manifesto presented by Al-Agha in his book, *Hizbullah's DNA and the Arab Spring*, 2013. Furthermore, the thematic analysis of Nasrallah's speeches undertaken in this research complements the analyses of interview data (the more common approach) in previous studies of Hizbullah to provide a more comprehensive examination and interpretation of the Party's ideology.

1.6 Thesis Structure

⁹ *Moqawama* translates to resistance
Introduction

Chapter Two:

Chapter Two of the thesis provides a brief historical background on Hizbullah to facilitate an understanding of the Party's dynamics and structure. The chapter provides an explanation of when and how the Party was created, along with its relation to the *Welayet al-Faqih* doctrine. The chapter then discusses the Party's significant political and social victories and setbacks to date, as well as its role as a regional actor. The examination in this chapter of the Party's reasoning for war with Israel and its participation in the Lebanese parliamentary elections provides the foundation in this thesis to explore the importance (and the role) of religion in Hizbullah's political development in general and its political pragmatism more specifically.

Chapter Three:

This chapter provides a review of the Social Sciences literature on religion in politics related to the fields of security studies and terrorism studies. The objective is to identify and discuss the core themes and issues raised in the literature and to briefly introduce their relevance or applicability to Hizbullah more specifically. Social Mobilisation Theory is also briefly discussed to provide insights into the theoretical lens often applied in the broader literature to examine or explain the Party's use of religion to mobilise its supporters. Lastly, Chapter Three reviews the literature on Hizbullah as a resistance / political entity, focusing particularly on the Party's ideology and identity, political pragmatism, and uses of religious tools to serve its domestic and regional socio-political agenda.

Chapter Four:

Chapter Four commences the examination of the role of religion in the Islamic tradition. This chapter explores Hizbullah as a case study of the interrelationship between religion and politics in contrast to the Western perspectives on religion and politics. The evolution of Islam includes the fusion of religion and politics. In turn, Islam as an organised political system has helped clerics to participate in politics and thus ensure they were not restricted to a religious status only. This

chapter demonstrates how the use of religious instruments such as *ijtihad* and *fatwa* has contributed to Hizbullah's success and how, within this framework, the Party has maintained its political freedom.

Chapter Five:

Given the focus in the previous chapter, Chapter Five explores in detail the Islamic notions of *fatwa* and *ijtihad* as they relate to Hizbullah's use of religion in the Party's speeches. Some conceptual links between casuistry and *fatwa* as issued by Hizbullah as discussed. Focus is given to the way in which the links provide a platform for the Party to use pragmatism as a political tool. Specifically, it explores how Hizbullah applies reasoning to Islamic principles when using religion to deliver a pragmatic outcome; that is, politically and/or militarily advantageous response to specific domestic and regional situations. Therefore, this chapter attempts to link *ijtihad* to 21st century IR approaches in which questions of morality, reasoning, and self-interest remain.

Chapter Six:

This chapter presents the thematic analysis of Nasrallah's speeches from 2000 to 2013. Focus is given in the thematic analysis to such aspects as Nasrallah's use of the Karbala narrative, references to the Palestinian cause, the Party's ideological commitment to *Welayet al-Faqih* and others to explore how they comprise the basis of the Party's politics. The thematic analysis also aims to highlight how religious principles / events are 'contextualised' by Nasrallah to serve a political purpose; for example, contextualising religious battles such as Karbala into the present-day conflict against Israel, domestic politics, and community service to closely link the culture of resistance to the Karbala rhetoric. Also, an examination of Hizbullah's command structure and chain of institutions is included to underline how these welfare institutions operate.

Chapter Seven:

In this chapter, an analysis of Hizbullah's changing role in Lebanon and the region is provided. For instance, the implications of the Party's participation in

the Syrian war are examined to determine what this apparent divergence from the Party's long-term policies tells about the nature of the Party. This chapter also tracks the Party's ideological commitment to Iran and how it stands against the Lebanonisation of the Party. These events are considered in relation to the way they have caused major setbacks to Hizbullah's mission and credibility in Lebanon and the Arab world. Chapter Seven also examines how Hizbullah's actions as a domestic and regional actor have caused new Shi'ite groups to criticise the Party and its mission, such as Rami Ollaik who initiated the "October 10 revolution" to voice the opinion of the Lebanese Shi'ites opposed to Hizbullah.

Chapter Eight:

Chapter Eight concludes this thesis with a reaffirmation of the study's aim, main findings, and their implications for our understanding of role of religion in politics. This chapter also offers recommendations for future research on Hizbullah as a case study for the changing role of non-state actors in security/terrorist studies.

2 Historical Background

In the formulation of social and political ideals, it is essential to take realities fully into account. This, commonly, does not occur in societies which have still not found their bearings.

(Salibi 1988: 38)

2.1 Introduction

Hizbullah has become of interest to scholars of politics, and there is a growing body of research into the Party (Al-Agha 2013), especially after its involvement in the bombing of the American Embassy in Beirut in 1983 (Norton 2007: 72-81).¹⁰ Consequently, the American government, and some European countries, have included Hizbullah on their terrorist lists. However, the Lebanese government continues to identify Hizbullah as a legitimate resistance group with the right to fight the Israeli occupation and subsequent incursions. Therefore, there is a need to assess the historical formulation of Hizbullah to comprehend the complexities and different dimensions in which this Party operates domestically and regionally. This chapter offers a historical overview of the Party's creation and development from a resistance group to a prominent political party. It begins by profiling the emergence of the Party along with its relationship to the *Welayet al-Faqih* principle. The focus then shifts to Hizbullah's transition to political participation in the Lebanese government and its efforts to build political support among Lebanese citizens. The chapter then examines the setbacks that the Party faced (such as the assassination of the former Lebanese prime minister- Rafic Hariri and the 2006 war with Israel), the Party's ability to face these setbacks, and how they shaped Hizbullah's domestic standpoint.

¹⁰ Prior to its official inception, Hizbullah was responsible for the bombing of the American embassy in Beirut in 1983, which then gave the group a great spotlight considering the magnitude of the attack.

2.2 The emergence of Hizbullah

The marginalisation of the Muslim Shi'ite community in Lebanon reveals a snapshot of neglect and political disregard (Ghorayeb 2002: 35-80). Hence, the emergence of Hizbullah did not only stem from the Israeli invasion and subsequent occupation of Lebanon in 1982 (ostensibly to control members of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation who had settled in Lebanon and were carrying out attacks against Israel (Norton 2007)), but also because of long abandonment and under-representation of the Shi'ite community in Lebanon (Traboulsi 2007: 110-130).

According to Norton (2007: 475-491), the main catalyst in the development of Islamist groups in Lebanon came because of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. Lebanese Shi'ites and Iran have a long history of cooperation going back to the 17th century (See chapter eight). Even before Imam Ruhollah Khomeini, a religious leader and politician, took power in Iran, there were some Shi'ite groups that were already politically active in Lebanon. For example, there was the *Committee of Ulema of the Bekaa*, "Islamic Committees", and the Lebanese branch of the Iraqi Shi'ite *Al-Dawa Party* - for which *Sayyid* Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah was the standard-bearer in Lebanon (Al-Agha 2011: 54-56). In addition, the grand scale of Israeli aggression against southern Lebanon in 1978, where most of the Shi'ite population resided, gave Iran reason to support these small emerging Shi'ite groups. Moreover, the leaders of the Shi'ite groups became aware of the need to put together a well-organised party structure. As Qassem (2004: 11-40) explained, Shi'ite leaders agreed that Islam would be the guiding principle for this Party and that it would follow Khomeini's model of *Welayet al-Faqih* (see Section 1.3 below for a discussion of *Welayet al-Faqih*).

This foundation represented the process in which Hizbullah would use a mode of operation, with ideological, practical and religious dimensions, to serve its political objectives (Hamzeh 2004: 15-40). This included the grounding principles for the creation of Hizbullah based on resistance against the Israeli occupation and the supremacy of the Supreme Guide (Ayatollah Khomeini at the time) as

the descendant of the Prophet and his Imams¹¹ (Qassem 2004: 11-40). Given these founding principles, the leaders of the Shi'ite groups set a proposal for establishing Hizbullah. A committee of nine – composed of three senior representatives from the cells founded by the *Committee of Ulema of the Bekaa*, the Islamic Committees and *Islamic AMAL (Afwaj al-Mouqawma Al-Lubnaniyya*¹²) – was responsible for submitting the proposal for approval by the Supreme Guide. Hence, after getting the blessing of Ayatollah Khomeini, “the different cells dissolved to form a single federating party that took the name Hizbullah” (Qassem 2004: 32).

Hizbullah formally announced its political program in 1985 (2004: 34 - 40). Since then the Party has been able to acquire military and financial aid from Iran, via Syria, through “experts from the Guardians of the Revolution, who set up military training camps in the Bekaa Valley to train Hizbullah militants” (Hamzeh 2004: 44). At the time, Hizbullah was not the only Shi'ite group in Lebanon. The Movement of Hope (AMAL) was founded in 1974 and was for a time the largest and most powerful Shi'ite group in Lebanon (Traboulsi 2007: 109-130). However, Hizbullah could distinguish itself as a Shi'ite Party separate from AMAL. The need to distinguish one party from another, stems from AMAL's involvement in the Lebanese civil war and specifically, the “war of the camps” in 1985 against the PLO. This damaged their standing among the Shi'ite community because it resulted in a clash against Palestinian factions who shared the same fight against Israel. Hizbullah's non-involvement in the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) increased its status within the Lebanese society. Unlike AMAL, Hizbullah presented itself as a party whose sole aim was to resist Israeli occupation and aggression against Lebanon – rather than to engage in violence over domestic matters – and this added to the Party's credibility and legitimacy.

¹¹ Many people claim that descent from the prophet's bloodline would comprise a certain level of insight. This is important in Shi'ite Islam where Imams have all claimed direct descent from the prophet.

¹² The Lebanese Youth Resistance

Hizbullah's ideological principles are organised according to Khomeini's *Welayet al-Faqih*, which entails forming an Islamic state in Lebanon (Norton 2007: 475-491). The following statement is taken from the group's political platform, first published in 1985:

The solution to Lebanon's problems is the establishment of an Islamic republic as only this type of regime can secure justice and equality for all of Lebanon's citizens. The Hizbullah organization views as an important goal the fight against 'western imperialism' and its eradication from Lebanon. The group strives for complete American and French withdrawal from Lebanon, including all their institutions (Al-Agha 2011: 39).

Thus, the acknowledgment of the supreme rule and authority by *Wali al-Faqih*¹³ constitutes one of the main attributes of Hizbullah's ideology. Therefore, an understanding of the *Welayet al-Faqih* structure is essential for this research in looking at Hizbullah's political strategy.

2.3 Integration of *Welayet al-Faqih* in Hizbullah's governance

The Islamic revolution, which took place in Iran in 1979, signified a turning point in the Middle East, with various repercussions arising because of this milestone. Khomeini, the leader of the Islamic revolution, used his role as a religious cleric to rally support for the uprising, which combined both religion and politics in all messaging. "In understanding the concept of religion in our Islamic culture, it is clear that no contradiction exists between religious and political authority. Political struggle is an integral part of the mission and duties of a cleric" (Taheri 2006: 67). In this regard, Khomeini promoted the *Welayet al-Faqih* model in Iran (Qassem 2004: 34-40).

To understand the transmission and adoption of this approach, by Hizbullah, the relation between the Party and the Republic must be assessed, which has been an important issue of debate among scholars in the West. The decisions of the Party have often been claimed to be an implementation or an instrument of growing

¹³ It is important to note the difference between a *Wali* and a *Welayet*. A *Wali* is the ruler while the *Welayet* is the district/state/province, it also means the ruling of.

Iranian power in the Middle East (Deeb 2013). Moreover, Hizbullah has often been referred to as Iran's proxy in the region. Nevertheless, this examination does not intend to suggest Hizbullah's disloyalty to Lebanon and loyalty to Iran. Unlike several accusations made by the March 14 bloc against Hizbullah, the Party has proven on several occasions its commitment to Lebanon as its homeland and defended the nation (see Chapter Six of this thesis) (often in the absence of formal state institutions, especially the army). Nasrallah continuously refers to Lebanon as the Party's homeland and highlights its willingness to defend the country. For example, Nasrallah stated in a speech in 2011 that:

I assert to you that this Resistance will remain adherent to Lebanon and all its people, national unity, civil peace, united army, strength and integrity, and all these conspiracies to sabotage Lebanon and cause sedition and civil war in Lebanon will be gone with the wind. I assert to you that your Resistance which you support and believe in will be greater than sedition and greater than the oppression afflicting it. It will be greater than the accusations. We have a great tolerance power. This is where our power lies. Our strength is that it is not easy to provoke us.¹⁴

While the power dynamics between the party and Iran remains ambiguous, the ideological adoption by Hizbullah of the *Welayet el-Faqih* doctrine is evident but has been tailored to suit the local context in which the Party operates. As well as in Lebanon, Hizbullah used the same approach as Khomeini during the Islamic revolution on numerous occasions. However, the Party applies a Lebanese interpretation of the *Welayet al-Faqih* doctrine in a way that it is tailored to the Lebanese domestic formula (Ghorayeb 2003: 73-77; Hamzeh 2004: 44-79). Nasrallah stated in 2009

I want or would like to inform you that the issue of *Welayet al-Faqih* (the authority of the Jurist leader), imamate and such issues are for us part of our religious conviction and doing harm to such issues is doing harm to our religious convictions. We are ready for whoever likes to get involved in a religious debate with us. But that indeed has nothing to do with elections, political campaigns, the government and deputies. Rather scholars, religious men and men of intellect and culture gather and make seminars and discussions as we discuss theology, prophet-hood, divine messages, jurisprudential rules and the Worldly and Hereafter affairs [...]

¹⁴ Alahed News (2011) Hizbullah SG Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah Speech on Parliamentary Consultations January 23, 2011, available at: <http://www.almanar.com.lb/english/adetails.php?fromval=3&cid=101&frid=23&seccatid=14&eid=126081> (accessed 30 July 2014).

In other religious convictions of other sects also there are convictions not unanimously agreed on by their sects. So, if it is not unanimously agreed upon that does not make it anymore a religious conviction which must be respected [...] (but especially Lebanon as it has such a clause in its Constitution which we all say we believe in): Avoid doing harm to our religious convictions and say about us in politics whatever you want.¹⁵

In his book on Hizbullah, Qassem (2004: 34-35) underscores that:

The Wali el-Faqih has the prerogative to monitor the proper construal of the Islamic law, to make important political decisions affecting the nation (*Umma*), to decide on war or peace, to safeguard the security of the nation and its financial interests, to ensure the redistribution of money collected by the religious authorities and to define the contours of the Islamic State.

Yet, despite blatant references to Wali al-Faqih, and the fact that Hizbullah's command resides in the hands of the Wali al-Faqih, the reality and context of the situation of each country needs to be analysed with care (Qassem 2004: 34-50). Qassem emphasises that Hizbullah is a "Lebanese political party in which all leaders, officers and members are Lebanese" (2004: 60). Therefore, Hizbullah recognises the authority of the Faqih in making major political decisions. Yet, the "detailed follow-up, resolution of disputes, daily disposition of political, societal and cultural matters including resistance to the Israeli occupation defaults to the Party's command" (2004: 62). The Party's command is based on the internal structure of the Shura Council headed by the Secretary-General who derives his legitimacy from the Wali el-Faqih (the following chart indicates the organisational structure of Hizbullah and the chain of command).¹⁶ Accordingly, while Hizbullah is in favour of the establishment of a state based on Islam, it is also committed to integrate itself and its followers into Lebanese society and it is quick to underscore that in practice such a project cannot be implemented (Shawkat 1998: 100-103). Moreover, the Party leaders and spokespeople have continuously affirmed that Hizbullah has no intention of establishing an Islamic state in Lebanon, even if it remains committed to Islam as the basis of its actions

¹⁵ The Saker (2009) Important speech by Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah about the recent elections in Lebanon, available at: <http://thesaker.is/important-speech-by-hezbollah-secretary-general-hassan-nasrallah-about-the-recent-elections-in-lebanon/> (accessed 8 March 2016).

¹⁶ Chart found in Avon and Katchadourian (2012:67).

(1998: 100-103). This concept is recurrently promoted in the Party's messaging, in order not to turn public opinion against the Party and for it to be positioned as a threat to national security, as it appeared in 2008, following the clashes on the street between Hizbullah fighters and their supporters, and opposing political parties. This incident augmented negative sentiment towards the Party and many political factions framed this incident as Hizbullah trying to establish an Islamic state in Lebanon and take over the country (Khatib 2013). The Party's leader, Nasrallah, had to be very careful in his messaging because of this, reaffirming that an Islamic state is not on the Party's agenda. Hizbullah's manifesto in 2009 announced that, taking the reality of Lebanon into account, its goal is to arrive at a multi-confessional leadership that would guarantee equal participation of all communities in managing the state (Al-Agha 2011: 50-65). Moreover, it is important to look at the political manifesto at length to pinpoint the abovementioned points. Hizbullah's political manifesto includes the claim that,

The resistance in Lebanon, including the Islamic Resistance - was the first to fight hegemony and occupation for more than two decades and a half. It has adhered to this choice at a time which seemed to be the inauguration of the US era which there were trials to depict as the end of history. In the light of the force balances and the circumstances that were then prevailing, some viewed the choice of resistance as a kind of illusion or political rashness or an inclination that opposes rationalism and logic.

Despite that, the resistance moved on its *jihad* process with absolute certainty of the righteousness of its cause and its capability to achieve victory while believing in Allah and trusting in Him, belonging to the whole nation and adhering to the national Lebanese interests, having confidence in its people and raising high human values: righteousness, justice and freedom.

Through its long path of *jihad* and its depicted victories - starting with the pull out of the Israeli occupation (forces) from Beirut, Mount Lebanon and fleeing from Sidon, Tyr, Nabatiyeh, July Aggression in 1993, April Aggression in 1996, the liberation in May 2000 and July War 2006 - this resistance secured its credibility and model before making its victories. The Resistance project has grown from a liberation power to a balance and confrontation power and then to a defence and deterrence one besides its political internal role as an influencing pillar in building the just and capable state.

Simultaneously it was doomed for the political and human status of the Resistance to evolve: it developed from being a Lebanese national value to a radiant Arab and Islamic value and it has become today an international human value; its model is being followed and its achievements are being taken into consideration by the experiences and courtesies of all those seeking freedom and liberty all around the world.¹⁷

Therefore, Hizbullah's push to establish an Islamic state in Lebanon ended with their participation in the Lebanese parliamentary elections, which was inevitable to safeguard their position in Lebanon.

2.4 The Hizbullah and Iran alliance

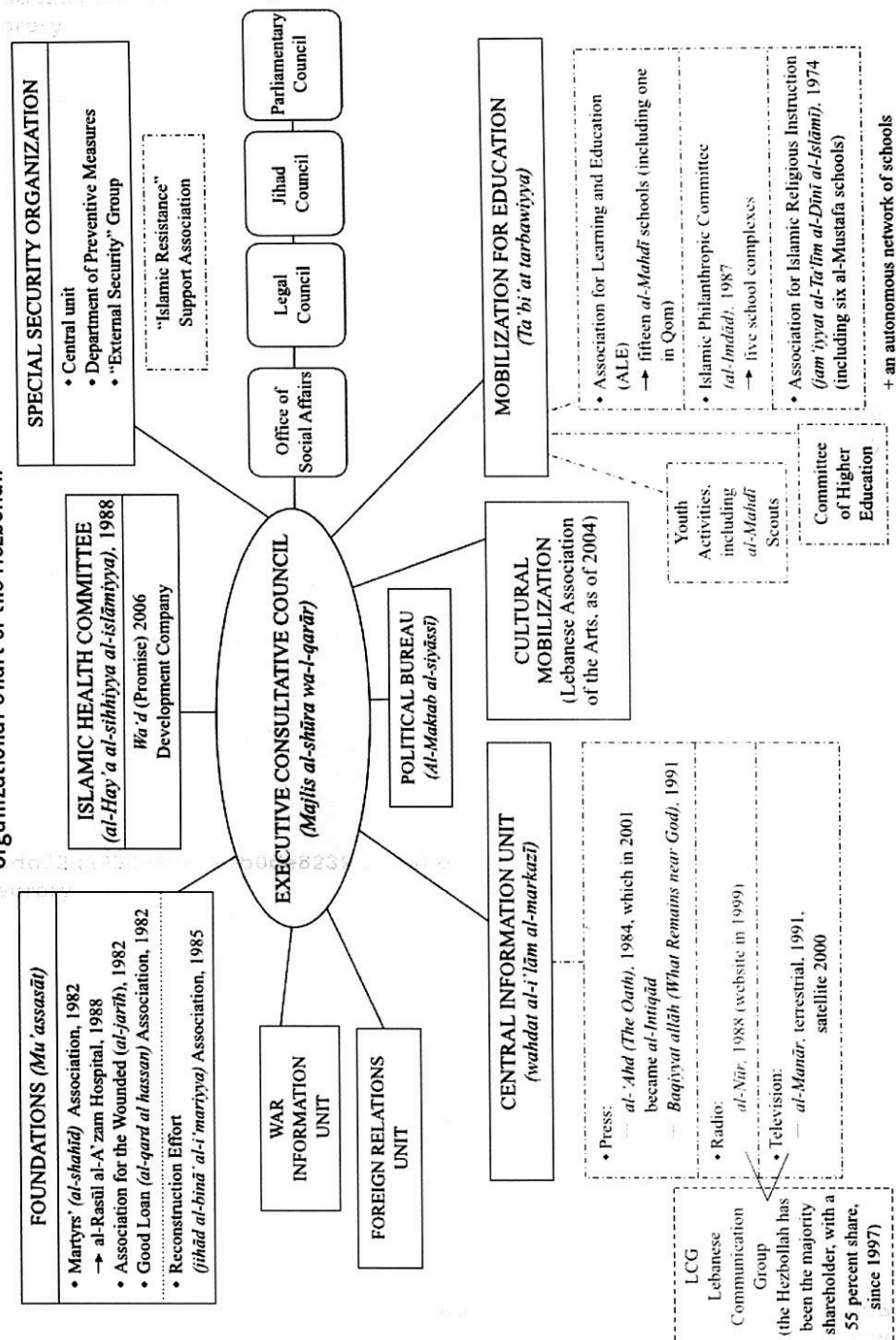
The intricacies of Hizbullah's organisational structure, bears many similarities to that of Iran, thus deepening the alliance between the Party and the Iranian state. The Party has structured its hierarchy and institutions in a way that reflects the bond between Hizbullah as a political group and Iran, in regards to shared elements with the Iranian institutional structure, the power of the clerics, and the use of religious rhetoric to highlight the Party's hegemony over its popular base. These elements indicated ideological similarities between the two.

Hizbullah's decision-making process has been one of the controversial and ambiguous aspects of the Party's structure. Limited sources are available which can identify the Party's hierarchical structure and delegation of authority, such as Hamzeh (2004) and Al-Agha (2011, 2013). Hamzeh (2004), for example, explained how the division of authority is assigned between the Shura council and other legislative bodies. On the other hand, Al-Agha (2013) offered a chart outlining all the executive and legislative bodies in the Party's structure.

¹⁷ Lebanon Renaissance (2009) The new Hezbollah manifesto, available at: <http://www.lebanonrenaissance.org/assets/Uploads/15-The-New-Hezbollah-Manifesto-Nov09.pdf> (accessed 4 January 2014).

However, little explanation has been offered to clarify the decision-making process between Hizbullah and Iran. Evidence based on analysis of Hizbullah and leading Shi'ite clerics, particularly Sheikh Qassem, clearly demonstrates that major political decisions, especially on war and peace, remain in the hands of the Wali al-Faqih. However, Hizbullah's actions that led to war with Israel in 2006, do not seem to have been coordinated with Iran. Hence, from the information offered, it can be concluded that there is considerable authority exercised by the Shura council (which is the top legislative body in the Party's hierarchal structure), which then carries most of the decision-making and is controlled by Hizbullah's religious members. The chart below offers a visual interpretation to how legislative and executive bodies correspond and how the authority is divided in Hizbullah's case. The chart offered by Avon and Katchadourian (2012: 67) who have obtained their data from Hizbullah sources.

Organizational Chart of the Hezbollah



by Avon, Dominique, Khatchadourian, Anais-Trissa, and Todd, Jane Marie. Hezbollah - A History of the "Party of God". Cambridge, MA, USA: Harvard University Press, 2012. Copyright © 2012. All rights reserved.

Furthermore, the alliance between Hizbullah and Iran can be analysed beyond this point, not solely based on organisational structure, but also tapping into the strategic and political significance of this alliance (Levitt 2013; Love 2010; Deeb 2013). Hizbullah's alliance with Iran has benefited it greatly however the relationship between Iran and Hizbullah carries with it a much more intertwined partnership than mere strategy. Hizbullah officials, to safeguard their existence as a resistance party, have continuously rejected the accusation of "taking orders from Iran", arguing that the Party's decision-making is an internal affair and Iran is a friend and an ally but does not interfere in the Party's internal decision-making (Qassem 2004). Hizbullah also receives great financial support from Iran. The amount of financial aid that Hizbullah receives annually varies between 100 and 300 billion dollars (Coughlin 2009; Levitt 2013). Hizbullah officials argue that all political factions in Lebanon are aligned with a foreign country (in reference to March 14 bloc alignment with America, France, and Saudi Arabia) and they see nothing wrong in Iran being a close ally of Hizbullah (Fadlallah 2015). This section, however, does not aim to dismiss other established arguments of the implications of the Hizbullah-Iran alliance. For instance, Deeb (2013) had presented Hizbullah as an agent of Iran in Lebanon, where Hizbullah works under the authority of the Wali due to its ideological commitment to the *Welayet al-Faqih* doctrine, while Saad-Ghorayeb (2003, 2013) had distinguished this alliance as a partnership with mutual benefits.

2.5 The transition towards political participation

Hizbullah's decision in 1992 to participate for the first time in elections was taken by the 12-member Shura Committee. The Committee considered whether the participation of Hizbullah in the Lebanese elections followed Shi'ite religious doctrine. By a majority of ten to two, the Committee approved Hizbullah's participation in the elections. This decision was later ratified by the Wali al-Faqih, Imam Khamenei (Azani 2009: 97). The ratification from Imam Khamenei came as a *fatwa* issued in May, 1992, asserting that Hizbullah's participation in the parliamentary elections has earned a "religious stamp of approval and moral justification in the community and made it possible for them to claim, on one

hand, that the movement was remaining faithful to its ideological path and vision and, on the other hand, to emphasise that entering the parliament would help further resistance activities" (Azani 2009: 97). In this regard, Nawwaf Mussawi, a Foreign Affairs official in Hizbullah, declared that this decision by the Wali did not stem from a political need, but rather to ensure that the political decision was compliant with the doctrine of the faith (Azani 2009). The extent of power and command which the Wali has over Hizbullah's Lebanon-related political matters is still unclear.

Since the early 1990s Hizbullah has sought to promote an integrated Shi'ite community through a network of social services (Harb and Leenders 2005: 173-197). As a result, Lebanese Shi'ites started to join in numbers, and the recruitment process took a more organised but also more secretive form. Hizbullah's handling of its recruitment process is a key to its success.¹⁸ Hizbullah, along with its non-Shi'ite electoral allies won 12 parliamentary seats including eight Shi'ite seats in 1992, holding about 10% of all parliamentary seats. Hizbullah also won control of two-thirds of important Shi'ite municipalities, including the Beirut suburbs of Burj el Barajneh and Ghobeyre.¹⁹ Hizbullah's participation in the elections was a turning point in their identity, which resulted in more group engagement with domestic politics. Hizbullah wanted to involve the Shi'ite population in Lebanese politics after years of exclusion. Therefore, Hizbullah's objectives were to eventually become part of the Lebanese political structure. That is why Hizbullah remains as a distinctive case in the literature of non-state actors, as this Party could successfully blend into Lebanese politics and still safeguard its mission as a resistance group based on its Islamist ideology.

¹⁸ Hizbullah's ability to survive and improve throughout the past 20 years has shown that recruitment is considered the most important element in Hizbullah's mission. There has been a large amount of funds set out for training camps and courses, in addition to creating cells within Hizbullah structure to detect members' behavior. In addition, Hizbullah's skills selection has also contributed significantly to its achievements (See Chapter Three; also, Farida, M. (2010) 'Field Notes on Hizbullah's Recruitment, Training and Organizational Structure', *Journal for Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, 5(2): 71-77).

¹⁹ These suburbs are of major concentrations of Shi'ites and are where significant Hizbullah operations are based.

2.6 The 'victory': May 2000

Israel's withdrawal of its troops from Lebanon in May, 2000, was regarded by Hizbullah as a victory (Khatib 2013: section I). The group then turned its attention to improving the Shi'ite community's standing in Lebanon. These efforts were directed at providing a range of social services that were not offered by the Lebanese government, such as enhanced construction, infrastructure, proper hospital services, education, water and electricity (Khatib 2013). Hizbullah provided services to all the communities in areas in which it was based, especially in Southern Lebanon, Beirut suburbs (Dahye), and the Bekaa, where its focus was on the city of Baalbek. This had a major effect on its level of popularity within those communities that benefited from the Party's activities (Khatib 2013; Saad-Ghorayeb 2002). The group established new schools in these communities, as well as volunteer humanitarian facilities that care for the injured and the families of martyrs, which include: *Jihad* for construction '*Jihad al-Bin'a*', the Islamic Health authority, the non-interest loan society, Islamic beneficiary support society, the Martyr's Association, the Islamic Institution for Education, *Al Jarha* (wounded) Association, and the *Emdad* Committee (financial assistance) (Hamzeh 2004). In addition, the Party has important sports, cultural, and informational institutions, such as the Imam Khomeini Centre, *Al-Ahd* magazine, and the *Al-Manar* TV channel, which constitutes a large part of the Party's information network (Khatib 2013).

Because of the increasing popularity of Hizbullah in Lebanon, as well as their evident and increasing assimilation in the Lebanese political spectrum, there were continuous and growing demands from the Lebanese government for Hizbullah to surrender its arms after May, 2000. However, in an interview with Al Jazeera network on December 2000, *Sayyid* Hassan Nasrallah, the Party's Secretary-General, described Hizbullah as being at the forefront (*al tali'a*) of the Palestinian armed struggle (cited in Harb and Leenders 2005: 176). Nasrallah also affirmed his Party's full support for the Palestinian intifada in December 2001, on Jerusalem's Commemoration day. Israel continues to occupy a small part of *Chebaa* farms, *Kfarshouba* hills, and *al Ghajar* town, which are on the border with

Syria.²⁰ Nevertheless, there were fewer attacks from Hizbullah on Israel following the victory of 2000 (Sobelman 2004: 67-70). In May, 2003, a Hizbullah parliamentarian said, in response to this new strategy, that they were “laying low”. Another Hizbullah parliamentary member described it as “temporary, tactical retreat” (Harb and Leenders 2005: 180). As for the question of Hizbullah’s disarmament, Nawwaf Mussawi, a Foreign Affairs official for Hizbullah, said in an article for *Assafir* newspaper in August 2003:

The basis of our objectives is related, on one hand, to the national environment governed by the theory of prevention and defence [*rade’ wa difaa’*], and on the other, to the liberation of the occupied Lebanese territories. Thus, calling for the demilitarization of Hizbullah is equivalent to calling for the removal of all security measures from Lebanon and for its deadly strategic exposure (Cited in Harb and Leenders 2005: 186).

Hence, disarmament of Hizbullah was out of the question. During the central ceremony to commemorate the 40th day for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, a central historic figure in Shi’ite Islam, which was held in the city of Baalbek in May 2012, Nasrallah affirmed, “Our arms are increasing in quality and quantity”.²¹

In 2004 the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 1559, which called for the disarmament of all militias (including Hizbullah) and for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon (which included the Syrian army). It is important to note that Syrian intelligence played a major role in controlling Lebanese politics, interfering in the general elections, as well as the nomination for presidential elections from 1992 until 2005 (Norton 2007: 475-491). For instance, Ghazi Kanaan (head of Syria’s security apparatus in Lebanon) and Rustom Ghazaleh (Syrian Military and Intelligence Officer) enforced a non-negotiable three-year extension for the presidential terms of Elias Hrawi in 1995 and Emile Lahoud in 2004. Rafic Hariri, the Lebanese Prime Minister at the time,

²⁰ The issue of these lands is controversial. It remains uncertain if these lands are Syrian or Lebanese. In addition, Syria was accused of using this factor to put pressure on Israel and to protect Hizbullah.

²¹ Alahed News (2015) *The speech delivered by Hizbullah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah during the ceremony marking the Resistance and Liberation Day held in Bint Jbeil on May 25th, 2012*, available at: <http://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=20414&cid=453#.WQE7i4V8jU4> (accessed 10 July 2014).

opposed Lahoud's extension and, following the extension of Lahoud's term under Syria's orders, Hariri resigned. Consequently, this has created a gap between Syria and Hariri which also negatively affected Hizbullah's position in domestic politics as an ally to Syria. Specifically, because Syria was accused of conducting the assassination of Hariri, there were also suspicions cast towards Hizbullah. Doubts started to surface as to what role Hizbullah may have played in the assassination, or at least towards how much the Party knew of the intended assassination attempt and the perpetrator.

2.7 Valentine's Day in Beirut/ Not for Hizbullah

On 14 February, 2005, Rafic Hariri was assassinated in a car bombing in the Lebanese capital, Beirut. The assassination was a major shock for the Lebanese population. It also marked a turning point for the Lebanese in general and for Hizbullah in particular. From that point onwards, major strategic factors changed and domestic challenges were introduced. Blame for the attack was generally directed at Syria, Israel and America. The assassination was followed by several huge demonstrations calling for justice and revenge, and Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon. The demonstrations, along with international pressure, succeeded in the complete Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in April, 2005, leaving the Lebanese divided into two major coalitions. On one side, the 14 March coalition represented the movement against Syrian interference. This coalition is based largely on religious representation, and could be labelled as an anti-Shi'ite grouping, included Sunnis (the Future Movement, headed by Hariri's son, Saad Hariri), the dominant Druze sect (Walid Jumblatt), and some Christian political parties (Lebanese Forces, Phalanges, Watanyeen Ahrar). At the other end of the spectrum, there was the 8 March coalition representing the campaign against American hegemony, which consisted of Hizbullah (along with AMAL), the recently returned from exile Christian Maronite leader General Michel Aoun, who heads the Free Patriotic Movement, Sleiman Franjeh, who heads the Christian group Marada, and Druze leader Talal Arslan.

Hariri's assassination was followed by several assassinations of other anti-Syrian politicians and activists. As an ally of Syria, these killings increased the pressure

on Hizbullah to disarm and further tested the Party's popularity in Lebanon as the public's level of trust towards the Party started to fall on suspicion of its role in the assassinations. The Party's standing was restored by Israel's attack on Lebanon in 2006 (Zisser 2009: 1-13), with 87 per cent of Lebanese supporting Hizbullah's response to the Israeli assault (El-Husseini 2010: 808). Consequently, the war with Israel was a major turning point for Hizbullah and its reception as a political party in Lebanon. It began after Hizbullah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers at the border, to conduct a prisoner swap; a tactic that had worked peacefully in the past with the Israelis (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 2003). It would have been part of the "*wa'ed el sadeq*"²² the faithful promise to return the three or four remaining Lebanese prisoners who were still in Israeli jails after the Israeli occupation. Israel's aggressive and disproportionate response to the kidnapping caused a shock to the Lebanese people, the government, and to Hizbullah. In the early hours of the morning following the kidnapping, Israel launched a full-fledged war on Lebanon which lasted 33 days, killing almost 1,300 civilians and destroying major roads, 48 bridges, and the International airport (Zisser 2009: 1-13; Norton 2007: 475-491). The intensity of the Israeli action made Hizbullah realise that it had miscalculated (Norton 2007: 475 - 491). Nasrallah revealed in his interview with New TV, a prominent Lebanese TV Station, on 27 August, 2006, that if Hizbullah had known or anticipated such a response from Israel they would not have gone ahead with the operation (Norton 2007: 480).

It is evident that the Israeli reaction to the kidnapping spread a wave of concern across the Arab region, and Nasrallah was later accused and criticised by many Arab states namely Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt and Jordan for his 'uncalculated adventures' (Norton 2007: 480). Despite all the criticism and lack of support from the Lebanese government, Nasrallah emerged from the war victorious, based on the failure of Israel to achieve its main objective, which was the destruction of Hizbullah - thus leading many to consider Hizbullah as the victor (Khatib 2013; Khatib et al. 2014). Hizbullah could limit ground attacks from Israeli soldiers.

²² The faithful promise- this narrative has developed as part of Hizbullah's promise to release all Lebanese prisoners from Israeli prisons.

Furthermore, the attack on one of the Israeli Navy *Sa'ar* 5 class Corvettes, took place during a speech being delivered by Nasrallah, who at the time, was ordering the attack on the ship. Nasrallah asked viewers to turn and look at the ship as it went up in flames, a move which was celebrated by many (Harb 2011; Khatib et al. 2014). Nasrallah's words were, "the Israeli warship that attacked our infrastructure, people's homes and civilians. Look at it burn"²³. This attack then turned Nasrallah into a hero for most Shi'ites in Lebanon and the region (Khatib 2013). Thus, Hizbullah achieved major strategic success in this war. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the 2006 war eventually created further divisions among the Lebanese. The war ended with a cease-fire agreement in August, 2006, under the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701, which called for the deployment of 15,000 U.N. soldiers along the border between southern Lebanon and Israel, creating a buffer zone.

After the 2006 war

The 2006 war was one of the many incidents resulting in further pressure on Hizbullah. Hizbullah's opponents questioned the Party's motives, accusing Hizbullah of being an agent for Syria and Iran, whose only purpose was to preserve their interests, as well as still considering the possibility of establishing an Islamic state (Norton 2007: 475-491). These accusations were not new and did not come about as a result of the 2006 war. As mentioned earlier, Hizbullah has faced these accusations since its emergence in the early 1980s.

After the 2006 war, there was a call from Hizbullah (and its coalition) for a 'national unity' government, of which Hizbullah and its political ally, the Free Patriotic Movement, would be a part. The tension escalated, when in October, 2006, Nasrallah demanded either the government agree to a national unity government or they would retaliate. This was followed by the resignation of Hizbullah's five Shi'ite members in the government after they were not consulted

²³ Shadid, A. (2006) Israel, Hizbollah vow wider war, *The Washington Post* 15 July 2006, 1, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/14/AR2006071400385.html>

on the approval of the International Tribunal set up to investigate Hariri's assassination under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.²⁴ This was March 14's only way to challenge Hizbullah and pressure them to surrender their arms, but it rebounded against them. Accusations against Hizbullah further increased after the May, 2008, conflict between members of the March 14 coalition and March 8 coalition, otherwise known as 'the May 7 conflict'. In his interview with New TV in August, 2006, Nasrallah reassured his fellow Lebanese that Hizbullah's weapons are only to fight Israel (Norton 2007: 475-491), but the developments during the week of May 7 suggested otherwise.

Shortly after, the Lebanese government (which was comprised of March 14 forces) decided to dismiss Wafiq Shuqayr, Beirut Airport's Chief Security Officer and a Hizbullah supporter. The dismissal was followed by the decision to shut down Hizbullah's private communication network (that serves as an internal and secure network of communication among Hizbullah cadres) (Zisser 2009: 14). As a result, Hizbullah supporters and members (along with AMAL members) clashed with March 14 members in various parts of Beirut. Fortunately, the clashes only lasted a few days, and negotiations were organised by Qatar (otherwise known as the Doha Accord). As a result, Hizbullah's communication network did not shut down, and Hizbullah and its allies were given one third of the seats (a plus one vote) in the Lebanese government as it would guarantee a majority vote. This gave Hizbullah the power to veto any government decision (Middle East Reporter 2011: 1-50)²⁵. As such, despite the fact that both the 2006 war and the May 7 2008 conflict played major roles in weakening popular support for Hizbullah, they did work to secure Hizbullah's position as a major political influence in the Lebanese government. Hizbullah consolidated its power and policies as it was not only presented as a powerful resistance army, it had also won one-third of the vote in the Lebanese government. This meant that the Party had increased its negotiation position with the government and was

²⁴ Which allows for the use of force to stop any threat to international peace and security.

²⁵ The agreement required legislation to be approved by a majority plus one.

increasingly being acknowledged as a political party within the system of government.

2.8 The Syrian war

Prior to the Arab spring in 2011, Hizbullah had established itself as a prominent political party in Lebanon and the region. The Party's regional status was elevated after the group's "victorious" war against Israel in 2006, in which Hizbullah became the only non-state army that was able to fight the Israeli army, by not allowing Israel to attain any of the goals set for the 2006 war, namely eliminating Hizbullah's arsenal, and weakening the Party's military presence in south Lebanon. Moreover, the Party had also established itself as an influential component in the Lebanese government, after it had achieved the plus one vote in the Doha accord following the signing of cease fire of the violent clashes in 2008 (see above). So, for Hizbullah, the objective of power sharing was closer than ever. However, the eruption of the Syrian revolution has put Hizbullah at a crossroads. While Hizbullah's position on the uprisings in Bahrain, Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt was clear in support of the revolution(s), the Party's attitude to the Syrian uprising was initially ambiguous. The Party restricted its political statements to a call for negotiations and reform, yet as the uprisings took an increasingly violent form, Hizbullah changed course. Hizbullah participated in the fight alongside the Assad regime against militant opposition groups and later fundamentalist groups²⁶. Nasrallah stated in 2012 that,

We are fighting alongside our Syrian brothers, alongside the army and the people and the popular resistance in Damascus and Aleppo and Deir Ezzor and Qusayr and Hasakeh and Idlib, [...] we are present today in many places and we will be present in all the places in Syria that this battle requires.

This is not a threat to the resistance in Lebanon or to one sector of the regime in Syria or the government in Iraq or a group in Yemen. This is a danger to everyone. No one should bury their heads in the sand. We invite

²⁶ Some of these militant oppositions groups are: Free Syrian Army, ISIS, Syrian Liberation Front, Army of Islam, and Southern Front. These groups were backed by countries such as Turkey, Qatar, U.S. , and Turkey.

everyone in Lebanon and the region to take responsibility and confront this danger and end their silence and hesitation and neutrality.²⁷

This intervention has had a number of implications for the Party's loyalty to regional allies, national interest, and its support base (where a number of suicide bombings targeted Dahye, Hizbullah's strong-hold, and resulted in numerous human and material losses). A survey of Shi'a communities of Dahye (a suburb in the south of Beirut), South Lebanon, and the Bekaa²⁸ conducted by ShiaWatch titled *15 Questions for the Lebanese Shia Community*, in February and March 2015, shows the insecurities of the Shi'ite community following Hizbullah's involvement in the Syrian war. The survey showed that 81.3% thought "things are moving in the wrong direction" when asked where Lebanon was heading. In the same poll in 2014, this figure was 59%. When asked about their financial situation, 66% indicated that their financial situation is "worse than it was last year". With respect to the country's economic situation, 86% indicated that it "Was worse than it was last year". In another interesting finding, when asked about Hizbullah and the Lebanese army forces, 95.6% answered that there "should be more cooperation between the Lebanese Army and Hizbullah", up from 83% in 2014.

Hence, the future of Hizbullah will be greatly affected by the way in which the Syrian war ends. The Syrian war is mirroring a rivalry for regional control, the increased role of Turkey and Qatar as supporters of the Syrian opposition is met with Iranian and Russian support of the Assad regime. Khatib (2015: 105- 111) had predicted that,

Hizbullah today is Lebanon's strongest political party. However, its military intervention in the Syrian conflict has put it at a crossroads. While the Party's domestic strength continues, largely due to the weakness of its Lebanese political opponents and to its reliance on the possession of weapons to intimidate them, Hizbullah is facing increasing challenges in Syria. Hizbullah – being Iran's key client – will find its autonomy and

²⁷ Aljazeera (2015) Nasrallah: Hezbollah to increase presence in Syria, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/nasrallah-hezbollah-increase-presence-syria-150524233716453.html> (accessed 2 June 2015).

²⁸ www.ShiaWatch.com; www.hayyabina.org (Accessed 30th July 2015).

ability to act in the domestic Lebanese sphere as well as externally reduced in the future.

It is then important to consider Hizbullah's intervention in the Syrian war as a changing point in the Party's political development.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter identified and discussed the key historical background events contributing to Hizbullah's emergence as a resistance movement and supporter of the Muslim Shi'ite community in Lebanon, to its transition to participant in the Lebanese parliament. Also included was an exploration of the Party's religious identity as evidenced in its commitment to the *Welayet al-Faqih* principle and how it was sustained throughout the Lebanonisation process undertaken by the Party. This chapter demonstrated that the transition by Hizbullah from a resistance group to a political party was confronted by a range of challenges at both the domestic and regional level. In turn, the Party's responses to these challenges provide valuable insights into its capacity to strike a balance between its religious and political identities in order to pursue its domestic and regional agendas. The following chapter explores how Hizbullah's religious and political identities are treated in the wider literature and what this might reveal about Hizbullah's shift towards political pragmatism.

3 Literature Review

Hizb Allah- Party of God (Surat al-Mujadilah 22)

“Lo! The Party of God, they are the victorious” (Qur’an verse 22, 56)

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to review the literature from the Social Science and Political Science fields related to the treatment of religion in security studies and terrorism studies. In addition, this chapter aims to demonstrate how the relevant literature represents Hizbullah’s ideology and political development, including the extent to which it explains (or fails to explain) how religion functions as a key factor underpinning this development. The chapter begins with an overview of the treatment of religion in security studies and terrorism studies. in general, before discussing its treatment in relation to the Middle East context more specifically. The focus then shifts to a discussion of the literature on Social Mobilisation Theory. The relevance of the theory to this research investigation is established, along with its key principles and applicability to Hizbullah’s development as a resistance movement and political party in Lebanon. The main objective in this section is to provide an explanation of Hizbullah’s pragmatism and its use of religious ‘tools’ such as *taklif shari*, *ijtihad* of *jihad* to facilitate mobilisation outcomes. A brief account of the role of religion in IR theory in general and in relation to IR in the Middle East more specifically is then provided. The focus of this chapter then shifts to a review of the literature on the ideology of Hizbullah. A change in behaviour by a State (or non-state actor) is often the result of shifting values, norms and principles (Guzzini and Leander 2006). These elements are often too general, however, and do not specify or signify the role of religion. The focus of this thesis is on the role of religion in Hizbullah’s decision-making and the need to address religion in both security studies and terrorism studies as a distinct element of identity. The key objective of this literature review is therefore to explore the extent to which Hizbullah presents a useful model for the way in which religion can play an important role in the political agenda of a

non-state actor. This model may then facilitate a more considered analysis of the role of religion in the politics of Islamist groups and non-state insurgents.

3.2 Security Studies and Religion

Since the end of the Cold War, the Middle East region has emerged as a new and unique area of interest in security studies as it represents a transition away from the 'balance of power' politics of the Cold War to what Walt (1987) has referred to as the 'balance of threat' alliances of Arab states. According to the author, the alliance politics in the Middle East and the dynamics of the relationships between Arab states reflect the concept of balancing threats that lie at the centre of security issues in the region. In turn, if one is to conceptualise State relations in the Middle East within a balance of threats dynamic, Barnett (1998) further argued that any attempt to understand the nature of the relationship dynamic must investigate the relationship between identity and security constructs. Given the sectarian nature of relations between (and even within) countries in the Middle East, religion will likely emerge as a key security referent in the different identity claims (Malmvig 2015: 33).

Religion has long been associated with securitisation claims. According to Patterson (2012: 117-118), "There are many ways that religion can foster or exacerbate conflict" including individuals' uses of religious justifications for violence, when religious actors claim the authority to prescribe violence (including killing), when religious texts mandate violence, or when a religion makes sacred something tangible, resulting in a spiritual obligation to protect it. In turn, the examination of religion in the context of security studies generally emerges from the premise that State (and presumably non-state) actors engage in conflict for ideational/cultural reasons which are separate to (or, at least, in combination with) material reasons. As such, it is important to consider the meso-level mechanisms that play a key role in the relationship between religion (specifically, religious nationalism) and international security (Gorski and Türkmen-Dervis,oglu 2012: 136).

3.2.1 Religion and contemporary national security paradigms

The inadequacy of realist hegemonic views of international security during the Cold War; namely, international stability via the hegemony (power) of one single nation was soon made evident when the Cold War ended (Snyder 2011: 1-5). Indeed, the role of non-state actors in conceptualisations of regional and international security was acknowledged along with the realisation that 'security' could no longer be conceptualised as related to one state's military strength compared to other states' military strengths. As Snyder (2011: 1-5) pointed out, new conceptualisations of national, regional and international security now include a combination of complex political, economic, and social factors within the broader context of military power. Arguably, religion is highly prominent among the social factors to influence security outcomes due to the implications it has for individual, group and/or national identity formation and for the framing of geo-political affairs, particularly for the Middle East.

In terms of national security paradigms, however, it is difficult to integrate religion into security frameworks because such frameworks are often secularised theological products (Malmvig 2015: 33-35). It is therefore perhaps not surprising that a review of the literature reveals there remains some debate among scholars and theorists regarding the exact nature of the relationship between religion and security in the context of regional or international affairs. Much of the debate surrounds the essentially subjective nature of religion and its place in the highly objective decision-making processes associated with national security policy formulation where the focus is on threats from actual adversaries (Shaw 2011: 1). Notwithstanding the merits of this argument, it is nonetheless difficult to dismiss the role of religion in both shaping and motivating individual or group behaviour and the implications this influence has for the internal or external security of nations. Of course, religion is not the only factor to shape and motivate the behaviour of individuals or groups towards violence (Lucius 2013: 50). However, as argued by Shaw (2011: 27), religion – as a force of influence over human behaviour rather than as a personal belief system – “has a powerful role in influencing matters of conflict and security”.

3.2.2 Religion and security in the Middle East

When focus is given to the relationship between religion and national / regional security in the Middle East, the literature reveals that academics, historians and sociologists invariably regard the issue as complex, complicated and multifactorial (e.g. Gross 2013; Patterson 2012; Seiple, Hoover and Otis 2013). Moreover, such complexities and complications are evidenced both at the intra-religion sectarian level as well as across multiple religions.

To illustrate the complexities, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is regarded by many as a religious conflict and there is little doubt that it continues to impact State, regional and global security in direct and powerful ways. However, as Waxman (2012: 238) has pointed out, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is fundamentally about land, not religion; who controls the land and who lives in the land; whereby religion is neither the origin nor the cause of the conflict. Nonetheless, religious identity is a key dimension in the conflict and how each side manages its use to achieve social, political and military outcomes has significant implications for security in the region (Waxman 2012: 238). Indeed, despite the "two-state solution" being regarded by the international community and many Israeli and Palestinian peoples as a potential territorial compromise to the competing claims to the same territory, it remains unacceptable on religious grounds to Zionists and Palestinian Islamists which both "sanctify the territory in dispute [and] claim exclusive possession of it" (Waxman 2012: 239-240).

In addition, when considering the relationship between religion and security in the operational and strategic environment of Iraq around 2006, Hoyt (2012: 262) has asserted that religion was "grossly manipulated by many factors and was a catalyst for violence and counter-insurgency." Even though the problems in Iraq were not all religious in nature, it quickly became apparent that the likely pathway towards lasting solutions for Iraq must be embedded in a religious framework. As a result, religious leaders emerged as an "extremely influential group" – along with politicians, the military, and security forces etc. – to manage

the outcomes of the war (Hoyt 2012: 263). It is worth noting Hoyt's (2012: 263) further assertion however that religious antagonism, violent sectarianism, and demands for radical *jihad* have "suffocated" any positive outcomes from strictly religious initiatives.

When focus is given to the relationship between religion and security in Lebanon particularly, historical accounts show that several wars in recent decades have been "infused to some extent with religious overtones" driven by conflicts of religious self-identity among Shi'a, Sunni, Druze, Maronite and Christians (Patterson 2012: 119). It is important to qualify that these conflicts are not or were not explicitly fought in the name of theology or religious self-identity, but rather for patronage, political power, economic resources, and social legitimacy. However, religion nonetheless remains critical to the generation of an 'us' versus 'them' distinction to legitimise the competition for resources (Patterson 2012: 119).

Thus, irrespective of the ideational rationale linking religion to security (conflict), it is widely acknowledged in the literature that the relationship can have significant ramifications. This is illustrated in the stark assertion from Patterson (2012: 123) that when religious identity and what is held to be sacred are aligned with "dividing trends" such as economic grievances, territorial claims, and human rights abuses, the result may be nothing short of "holy war" according to Islamic *jihad* or Serbian Orthodoxy for instance.

3.2.3 Islam as a social-identity marker: taking a nuanced approach

A common view to emerge in the literature is that the principle of faith identification is at the centre of the relationship between religion and security. This point is elaborated on by Patterson (2012: 119) in his explanation of how religion can serve "as a critical communal social identity marker" that provides the platform for its use as a leverage point for political, social (including violence), and/or economic outcomes. Regarding Islam specifically, revelations in the Qur'an that authorise and in some cases command Muslims to fight –

politically, militarily, and diplomatically – “against those who would fight the Muslims ... to ensure the victory and sustainability of his community” (Gross 2013: 57) present significant implications for the security landscape in the Middle East. Indeed, the conclusion drawn by early Muslim jurists that “war for the cause of religion (*jihad*) was legitimate” (Gross 2013: 58) represents what Ayaz and Ahmad (2013: 72) have characterised as the obligation of Muslims to safeguard the path of justice, punish the treacherous, eradicate internal enemies of the state, and support the oppressed.

As such, a nuanced discussion of the role of Islam in domestic, regional and/or international security matters is needed because of the different sects and varying positions within the religion itself (Shaw 2011: 27). In terms of Shi’ite Muslims in the Middle East, the cleric-dominated state of Iran present as the champion of their security in the region, with support provided to the neighbouring Shi’a communities in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Lebanon (Gross 2013: 57). In turn, Gross (2013: 57) has argued that Shi’a Muslims have always had a preoccupation with security, driven in large part by the harassment and persecution they have been subjected to due to “their minority status within the larger Sunni Muslim world”.

Furthermore, the security of Shi’a communities in the Middle East is often contextualised in the literature as an inter-sect conflict; namely, an ‘us versus them’ dynamic between Shi’a and Sunni communities. As explained by Gross (2013: 58), with the political ascendancy gained by Sunnis throughout the Islamic world, Shi’a Muslims are largely regarded by them as a “despised heretical sect”. This has prompted the security of Shi’a communities to become (and remain) a priority agenda for Iran and sects within other countries in the Middle East (e.g. Hizbullah), with Shi’a communities looking to their religious leaders (*ulama*, *mujtahids*) for guidance and strength (Gross 2013: 60). However, as Gross (2013: 57) further explained, Shi’a communities have traditionally relied upon political quietism²⁹ rather than assertiveness as a method to achieve their political agenda,

²⁹ ‘Quietism’ (*Taqqiya*) and ‘Activism’ are two broad political traditions of Islam. Political quietism is generally understood as the religiously motivated retreat from political matters. The quietist tradition may

notwithstanding the revolutionary change within the Shi'a message driving the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Of relevance to this thesis is the inference made in the literature that the cleric-controlled government in Iran and the "powerful and decisive role" played by Hizbullah in Lebanese politics point to the contemporary revival of sorts of the Shi'a in the Middle East (Gross 2013: 65). This revival is openly regarded as a threat to regional and international security by the West and the Sunnis (e.g. Saudi Arabia's efforts to contain the Shi'a resurgence). As such, the security of Shi'a communities is reflected in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran and facilitated to some extent through Iran's provision of financial, advisory, and military support to Shi'a groups. However, as stated by Gross (2013: 66), how Shi'a citizens in Lebanon and other countries "view the requirements for their security may eventually take precedence over the view of their clerics". This therefore requires an exploration of the notion of non-state actor insurgency and its treatment in terrorism studies.

3.3 Religion and Terrorism Studies

Terrorism literature is primarily located in the disciplines of Social Science (e.g. political science, international relations, sociology, law etc.) and Military Science (Schmid 2011b: 458-489). Undoubtedly, the advent of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the US pushed Terrorism Studies "to the forefront of international and domestic security studies" (Schmid 2011b), particularly in relation to what is regarded as non-state terrorism.

The term "terrorism" is contested and there have been numerous definitions in existence, but for the purpose of this thesis, Schmid (2011) definition will be adopted. Terrorism has been broadly defined by Schmid (2011a: 2) as the perpetration of a violent act to "maximise uncertainty and hence anxiety" about

be adopted when one accepts that it is forbidden to rebel against a Muslim ruler or when one seeks to protect oneself from danger. For instance, it was an approach adopted by Shi'ite Muslims to protect themselves from continuous persecution.

the possibility of a sudden and violent death to “manipulate actual and prospective victims and those who have reason to identify with them”. In turn, Schmid (2011a: 2) further asserted that acts of terrorism can be considered through five conceptual lenses: crime, politics, warfare, religion and communication. According to the author, these frameworks are neither mutually exclusive nor prioritisable. Moreover, given the complex and multidimensional nature of terrorism, it is evident that it cannot be studied in isolation of broader forms of political violence such as insurgency and war, as well as non-violent but persuasive or coercive political communication (Schmid 2011a: 7).

A review of the literature reveals that attempts to develop a typology of terrorism have seen typographers consider the role of ideology, including religious ideology, when classifying terrorist groups. This has proved to be problematic however given that terrorism does not have an inherent or integral link to one ideology. This view is encapsulated in the assertion from Shani (2016) that terrorism is a method that can be adopted by any number of ideologies for an equally wide range of agendas.

When applying religion as a conceptual lens, an act labelled as “terrorist violence” may be positioned and/or understood as action within the context of sacrifice, martyrdom, sacred cause and the like (Schmid 2011a: 2). In turn, it is notable that “religious terrorism” has emerged as a classification within the terrorism typology framework. This too has proved to be problematic however given the many and varied definitions of religion (Marsden and Schmid 2011: 168). Nonetheless, within the typology, religious terrorism is often classified based on the motives of the State or non-State actors – which typically manifest as a conflagration of political and ideological orientations (Marsden and Schmid 2011: 173-178).

3.3.1 Theories of terrorism

It is clearly apparent in the literature that there is yet to be a consensus achieved among academics and sociologists as to a general theory of terrorism. As

McAllister and Schmid (2011: 202) explained, this is due in most part to the “great variety of types of terrorism” that such a theory is called on to explain, as well as to the role of politics, religion, and ideology when defining the illegitimate versus legitimate uses of violence. Nonetheless, in the pursuit of a general theory of terrorism, academics have sought to draw a distinction between State and insurgent terrorism. According to Claridge (1996: 48), although the psychological strategy underpinning the act of terrorism by a State versus insurgent group is relatively the same; namely, the use of illegitimate violence to operationalise fear as a mechanism of coercive control, the main difference lies in the more extensive material capabilities available to the State to serve its agenda. Moreover, Gurr (1986: 45-50) has proposed that three criteria may be applied to provide a theoretical explanation of the illegitimate use of violence by a State: the violence is intended to actualise a threat; it is intended to create fear in the population; and it is explicitly or implicitly sanctioned by the State.

In terms of insurgent terrorism, current theories often seek to establish a link between insurgent violence and economic hardship or marginalisation (McAllister and Schmid 2011: 249). For instance, the theory of relative deprivation developed by Gurr (1986: 45-50) has posited a relationship between violent insurgence due to political frustration and a perceived gap between individual entitlement and the individual’s capacity to achieve one’s goals. At this point it is useful to draw on the work of Stepanova (2008: 9-11) who defines terrorism as a form of asymmetrical conflict between the State and the insurgent group, but from the perspective of three possible types of asymmetry: power, status and vulnerability. According to Stepanova, power always favours the State and the State almost always has a monopoly on legitimacy (i.e. status) at both the domestic and international levels. However, in terms of vulnerability asymmetry (i.e. ideological and structural disparities), this typically accrues to the advantage of the (weaker) insurgent group because it is typically less restrained than the State to initiate a response to provocation and to frame its response as collective action (Stepanova 2008: 9-11). In turn, the recourse to violence by an insurgent group is more likely when individuals perceive there to be a lack of political,

social, and economic avenues available for goal attainment (Gurr 1986: 317). This sentiment is reflected in the evidence-assertion by McAllister and Schmid (2011: 249) that insurgent violence is underpinned primarily by three root causes: economics, politics and culture, in addition to a fourth cause presenting as a fusion of the three primary causes; namely globalisation.

Rather than State terrorism, the interest in this thesis is primarily on the current explanations of insurgent terrorism and their applicability to Hizbullah as an insurgent non-state actor in Lebanon and the Middle East region more broadly.

3.3.2 Hizbullah and insurgent terrorism

As a generalisation, “insurgent terrorism itself can take many forms” (McAllister and Schmid 2011: 213). In turn, McAllister and Schmid (2011: 213) have argued that the three most commonly agreed strands include: stand-alone, peacetime terrorism manifest primarily as armed propaganda for recruitment and mobilisation; embedded terrorism which is enmeshed with warfare; and global terrorism as demonstrated by movements with international ambitions (e.g. Al Qaeda).

Regarding Hizbullah, any associations made in the literature between the Party and insurgent terrorism typically reflect the notion of embedded terrorism “as a form of asymmetrical conflict” (McAllister and Schmid 2011: 241), As stated by Jongman (2011: 342-343), asymmetric conflict perpetrated by insurgent groups manifests as a challenge to “the monopoly of (legitimate) violence held by states” and generally aims to protect civilian populations from “discriminatory state policies and practices”. In such contexts, the insurgent (terrorist) groups fight on the behalf of oppressed groups through the development of “new protest and action methods to challenge governments” often, but not always, using violence. Importantly, asymmetric conflict typically relies on networked (and often decentralised) uses of communication, transportation and weapons technologies to overcome its adversaries and achieve its agenda. This approach is often theorised as providing greater resilience to attack than the hierarchical insurgent

counterparts as well as greater adaptability and flexibility to initiate operational changes (McAllister and Schmid 2011: 241).

Some of the attributes of embedded terrorism (manifest as asymmetrical conflict) are arguably present in the actions of Hizbullah, and this has been used by the US and Israel to label the Party by as a violent extremist organisation (Paine, 2017, p. 1), and subsequently place it on a terrorist watch list. However, as McAllister and Schmid (2011: 242) have pointed out, the Party is fundamentally a political and hierarchical entity rather than a networked or decentralised organisation. As such, it “must procure social and political goods to maintain organizational salience” and coordinate campaigns of asymmetrical conflict while simultaneously articulating coherent political and social platforms (McAllister and Schmid 2011: 242).

The hierarchical structure of Hizbullah rather than the highly distributed organisation of Al-Qaeda for instance means it is “more adept at providing the social and political goods” associated with success (McAllister and Schmid 2011: 242). McAllister and Schmid accounted for this assertion by arguing that the centralised command and control structure makes it easier for the terrorist organisation (political institution) to “articulate a coherent political platform” and coordinate sophisticated terrorist campaigns. Key elements in what may be regarded as successful terrorist activities include the provision of social and political goods for constituent communities such as social welfare outcomes and political victories against the state (McAllister and Schmid 2011: 242). However, it is important to note that Hizbullah is not regarded as a terrorist organisation in Lebanon. Notwithstanding the different perspectives of the Party among Shi’ite and Sunni Muslims as a result of their different affiliations in Islam, Hizbullah is generally viewed by the Lebanese as a legitimate political entity deeply connected to national politics and as necessary to protect and represent them (Mouzahem, 2017).

3.3.3 Anti-Hizbullah voices

While few would argue the success of Hizbullah in progressing its political platform, the coherency of the platform itself has been the subject of some criticism. Indeed, Hizbullah's short-term objectives have been widely criticised following the Party's intervention in the Syrian war in 2012. The literature provided on Hizbullah's intervention in the Syrian civil conflict suggests that the Party went to the aid of the Assad regime based on Iran's instructions. For example, Khatib (2013) asserted that even though Hizbullah did not favour intervention in Syria for fear of losing credibility in Lebanon (and the region), it nevertheless had to yield to Iran's orders to protect the Assad regime. This was therefore essential in exploring Hizbullah's use of *taklif shari* (a religious tool) in mobilising members to fight in Syria, as will be explained in later chapters.

The Party's decision to take part in the Syrian war was presented as necessary to protect "the backbone of resistance", as Nasrallah claimed. Yet, even though the Party attempted to justify its participation in the Syrian conflict this did not stop domestic, regional and international criticism of the Party. These critical voices included Lebanese Shi'ite political activists not overtly aligned with any political group (Khatib 2013).

It is important to shed light on the voices in the literature that criticise Hizbullah as they balance the commonly held belief that all Lebanese Shi'ites are supporters of Hizbullah or that Hizbullah represents 'the voice' of Lebanese Shi'ites. Rami Ollaik, a former Party member, is an example of a voice that could be characterised as oppositional or anti-Hizbullah. In his books, *Bees Road* and *Under the Green Water*, Ollaik (2013) summarises his work with the Party and described the Party's monopolisation of the Shi'ite community through its hijacking of resistance. Ollaik (2013) has claimed in several televised interviews that he had received threats for speaking out and he has accused Hizbullah of ambushing him in a town in south Lebanon in order to stop him from presenting in a seminary talk in *Yohmor* in 2013. Regardless of whether Ollaik's accusations are accurate, and despite the reasons behind Ollaik publishing his books (perhaps to

undermine the Party), it does give the impression to outsiders that the Party's claim to have a hold over the Shi'ite community is questionable.

Lokman Slim, director of the ShiaWatch centre, is another Shi'ite voice of opposition. ShiaWatch is an electronic publishing space where articles are issued that oppose Hizbullah's politics. ShiaWatch have also conducted a quantitative study of Hizbullah's support in the Shi'ite community. The study concluded:

Despite Hizbullah having asserted its "representation" of large sectors of the Lebanese Shia community (although in this context, the very notion of representation must be deconstructed – and not just from an electoral or political viewpoint), the mutual identity of the organisation and the community was usually misinterpreted despite numerous attempts by observers of Lebanese and Shia issues that define this symbiosis (Polling Dahye 2014: 3).

The importance of this report is that it not only questions the Party's control over the Shi'ite community and its popularity, it also demonstrates that the Party's integration into the Lebanese political system has rendered it open to criticism and to demands for accountability from the public. On that note, Hizbullah has been criticised by religious figures including Shi'ite clerics, Sheikh Hani Fahs and Sheikh Sobhi Tufaili. Tufaili, the group's first Secretary-General (1989-1991), who claims that the Party's involvement in politics has diverted it from its main objectives to resist Israel and to improve the living conditions of Lebanon's Shi'ite community. Tufaili organised a demonstration in July 1997, named "revolt of the hungry", a reference to the Party's initial slogan (Sadiki 2010: 227). Additionally, Fahs accused Hizbullah of being exclusionary by aiming to separate and isolate the Shi'ite community from the rest of the Lebanese community. Such critical voices (which will be re-visited later) indicate a willingness to critique Hizbullah's claims of hegemony.

The following section briefly discusses the role of religion in contemporary IR theory and the extent to which it helps to explain Hizbullah as a resistance and political actor in Lebanon and the broad region.

3.4 Religion in International Relations

A review of the literature reveals a general view among scholars that the role of religion in IR theory had received little attention prior to the end of the Cold War and the events of 11 September 2001. According to Sandal and James (2011: 4) this was mostly “due to reluctance of IR theory scholars rather than the nature of IR per se”. They explained that during the World Wars and Cold War era of the twentieth century the focus in IR analysis was primarily on the material capabilities of nations and how they impacted tensions and alliance patterns rather than the influence of non-material factors such as religion or morality (Sandal and James 2011).

Despite the recent increased attention among academics and analysts, just how religion should be integrated into IR theory remains a topic of debate. Snyder (2011: 216-217) has pointed to four main schools of thought on this issue: (1) traditional theoretical paradigms should be applied that explore how religion shapes state systems and constitutive units; (2) new theoretical paradigms should be applied such as Huntington’s prediction in *The Clash of Civilisations* (1996) of a shift from the ideological to the cultural (including religion) as the primary source of conflict between states; (3) traditional paradigms should merely be adjusted to acknowledge religion as a “sufficiently pervasive and distinctive” force in IR; and (4) religion should be reconceptualised as a causal variable that affects the likelihood of war. In turn, whatever theoretical approach is applied, religion in politics is invariably positioned within contemporary IR discourse as a potential driver of grievances or conflicts in IR (Anderson 2008).

Notably, also evident in the literature is the view that conflicts in IR which appear to be religious in nature are in fact most likely about some other issue (Sandal and James 2011). From this perspective, the role of religion in IR should be viewed as the work of skilled political operatives who look to use religious rhetoric or instruments to justify action or to mobilise populations in contexts of perceived social or economic injustices or inequalities (Anderson 2008: 215-217).

Based on this view, some analysts may argue that Hizbullah, for example, merely utilises religion as an instrument to “explain, persuade and justify both current grievances and future remedies” (Anderson 2008: 217).

If the premise is accepted that religion does in fact play a significant role in contemporary IR, then the key point for consideration is the extent to which religion itself is the paradigm through which to understand conflicts in international politics or whether it is the state, albeit influenced by religion, which most influences IR (Snyder 2011). Thus, as stated by Sandal and James (2011), the question arises as to whether religion should be investigated as an independent variable (i.e. as a cause), an intervening variable (i.e. as a link between the cause and outcome), or a dependent variable (i.e. as the by-product of other non-religious factors).

3.4.1 Religion in constructivist international relations theory

Constructivism emphasises the importance of social relationships in international systems, the influence of identity on shaping political action, and the relationship between agents and socio-political structures (Roach, Griffiths & O’Callaghan 2014: 54). Drawing on critical international theory, some constructivist thinkers (e.g. Behravesch 2011; Hough, Malik, Moran and Pilbeam 2015) emphasise empirical analysis as a process to understand international politics. In turn, the focus of the analysis is placed on how ideational structures such as religion can “shape the behaviour of social and political actors, be they individuals or states” (Roach et al. 2014: 224).

Constructivist thinkers differ from rationalist thinkers (discussed below) in that the latter place most emphasis on the material structure of the balance of military might. Constructivists assert that non-material (i.e. ideational) structures shape the political actor’s social identity and thus influence the actor’s interests and ultimately his actions (Adler 2013). To clarify, “ideas always matter” in the ideational perspective of IR posited by constructivists (Jackson and Sorensen 2016: 307). Therefore, the meaning assigned to the material capabilities of

countries is shaped by intersubjective beliefs including ideas, conceptualisations, and assumptions. In alliance structures, the mental constructs held by the political parties can thus act to orientate their foreign policies and actions (Jackson and Sorensen 2016: 162-177).

3.4.2 Religion in realist international relations theory

Sandal and James (2011) have asserted the benefits of realism – both classical realism and neorealism (structural realism) – over constructivism to explain the role of religion in IR. The classical realist perspective of IR emphasises the role that ‘human’ variables such as ego, morality, self-interest (e.g. for security), and power relationships play in driving and constraining the actions of states (Korab-Karpowicz 2016: par. 2). In turn, religion may be linked to human nature in the context of IR in the sense that it is a psychological construct linked to the expression of identity, decision making (generally for what are perceived to be ‘just’ outcomes), and action taking (Sandal and James 2011: 9).

For instance, in the classical realism lens applied by Niebuhr (1932) and Morgenthau (1956), religion is part of the human imagination and functions in ethnic conflicts as both an independent variable by defining ‘us’ and ‘them’ and as an intervening variable by bringing people with different grievances together. It is noted however that while religion remains in classical realism IR theory as an element that may influence the behaviour of the state, the state (or non-state entity) remains the central political actor.

3.4.3 Religion in neo-liberal international relations theory

The role of religion in IR is given greater scope in the neoliberalism school of thought on IR compared to realism paradigms. Neoliberalism posits that political theologies – defined by the way religious parties conceptualise legitimate political authority – can influence how religious communities connect their beliefs to political actions in relation to situations of conflict and cooperation (Philpott 2007). Hence, as stated by Sandal and James (2011: 16), “a state’s religion can potentially be a tool to legitimate, support or destroy a ‘regime’”.

Furthermore, although neoliberalism recognises states as the primary actors in IR (like classical realism IR theory), non-state actors and the way they can erode the autonomy of the state in the pursuit of their own goals are given greater weight in neoliberalism (Philpott 2007). Non-state organisations including terrorist organisations may demonstrate this point if they employ religious rhetoric to bring about regime change through the eradication of existing institutions and the installation of different social and political expectations based on new points of focus (Sandal and James 2011).

Religion can therefore be used as a tool by non-state actors (including terrorist groups) to influence their supporters on the actions required in response to local and regional objectives. As such, neoliberal theories of IR help to explain Hizbullah's use of religion to guide its alliance choices and to strengthen its political legitimacy at home by responding to the physical and spiritual needs of the Lebanese people.

The following sections explore how contemporary IR theories that integrate religion as an important variable apply to the Middle East region broadly and Hizbullah more specifically.

3.4.4 Religion in International Relations in the Middle East: Implications for Hizbullah

To provide a broad investigation of how Hizbullah uses religion to pursue its domestic and regional agenda, it is necessary to briefly explore the role of religion in IR in the Middle East and the implications for Hizbullah, specifically. Studies of IR and the Middle East region are generally limited to an analysis based on social movement and post-colonial theories. This has led scholars such as Fox and Sandler (2004) and Philpott et al. (2011) to investigate the importance of religion in contemporary international affairs. As argued by Philpott et al. (2011: 8), "religion matters [...] and such understanding is crucial for grasping contemporary global politics".

Khashan and Moussawi (2007: 5) also reflected on the need to investigate the effects and the role of religion in Middle East politics and in IR. The authors pointed out the role religion plays, not just in matters of belief, but also in filling the gaps in civil society as a “competitor for political space”. As such, they asserted:

In the Middle East, religion has survived as the main source of allegiance since it was never seriously contested by modern crosscutting cleavages based on economic interest or territorial nationalism. The weakness of civil society, as well as its suppression by successive dictatorships, has ensured that religion would remain as the primary outlet for political mobilisation (Khashan and Moussawi 2007: 5).

Thus, the emerging claim that IR needs to view religion as instrumental in, not separate from, politics has clear implications non-state groups in the Middle East such as Hizbullah. Hizbullah is particularly interesting for its ability to merge its religious identity with its political objectives. As stated by Khashan and Moussawi (2007: 16):

Hizbullah has presented itself as a role model for other jihadist movements, especially Hamas. Palestinian Islamic militants incorporated suicide missions in their fight against Israel after they interacted with Hizbullah members in Marj al-Zuhur on the Lebanon-Israel borders. In addition, Hamas learned from Hizbullah to avoid involvement in polemics and to shun religious debates.

The power relationships in Lebanon are inevitably impacted by broader IR such as the provision of finances to the March 14 Coalition and military aid to the Lebanese government by Saudi Arabia (Gause 2015: 16), and the implications for Hizbullah’s power base through its alliance with Syria and Iran (Patrikarakos 2012: 32-46). This context reconfigures the relationships of power in Lebanon towards sectarian balance and thus restricts and reshapes Hizbullah as a *jihadist* movement. Qassem (2010) understands that it is important to improve relations with the West and Hizbullah looks to establish such relations in the future. Hizbullah however is seemingly resilient enough to carry out the transformation (Khashan and Moussawi 2007).

Furthermore, Dionigi (2014: 97) emphasised the contingency of these foundations: “the origins and formation of Hizbullah can be understood and explained only as resulting from concurrent dynamics, including transnational networks, regional [...] and social conditions within the Lebanese context”. Therefore, Hizbullah finds itself within a dualistic ideology: one nationalistic and another “transnationally Islamist” (Dionigi 2014: 97). Additionally, the extent to which systemic or domestic pressures influence the actions of non-state actors is explored by Szekely (2016). One of the key points made by the author is that the assumption that non-state actors have different priorities to state actors will mean that system-level factors will not matter a great deal to them. It is generally assumed that the priorities of non-state actors are typically concerned with local conflicts; namely, the “overthrow of a particular regime, the control of specific territory or (in practice if not in theory) victory over rival militias” (Szekely 2016: 75). As such, shifts in regional realignment – as opposed to domestic political affairs – will do little to direct their behaviour, with the alliance behaviour of the non-state actors at the local, regional, and international levels driven primarily by an evaluation of which alliances will assist them to achieve their objectives (Szekely 2016).

Hizbullah’s actions in response to the Syrian Civil War draw attention to the Party’s international relations; that is, its relations with surrounding states and political movements and appear to demonstrate that the Party has “other concerns that trump the ‘resistance’ project” (Szekely 2016: 75). Hizbullah is described by Szekely (2016: 76) as a ‘proto-state actor’, occupying “a conceptual space somewhere between states and non-state actors”. As such, the Party has a clear political presence and undertakes actions that support or challenge the elected government’s authority or legitimacy, but which lacks “the authority and recognition afforded to the government” (Szekely 2016: 76). In turn, the implication of Hizbullah’s proto-state actor position in Lebanon which is of interest to this thesis is the way in which the Party uses religion as a key tool in the different state functions it assumes and in the way in which it conducts its international relations in the region.

In terms of contemporary IR theory and the recognition by some theorists of the role of religion in international politics, the decision and actions of non-state actors such as Hizbullah, related to regional alignment in particular, take on a new perspective. Much has been written for instance on the ways that the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Sunni-Shi'ite division in the Middle East (typified by the Saudi-Iranian strategic rivalry) have significantly impacted the foreign policies of states in the region, including the extent to which they become involved in the politics of neighbouring states and engage with non-state actors (Guzansky and Berti 2014).

Regarding Hizbullah specifically, Szekely (2016: 76) has provided a comprehensive exploration of the way regional politics and events have impacted the Party's alliances. The author has pointed to the way the Party has clearly "benefited militarily, politically and financially from its relationship with Iran". Moreover, Hizbullah's political influence in Lebanon (and its access to arms) increased as a result of its alliance with Syria during the Syrian occupation of Lebanon up to 2005. More recently, Hizbullah has emerged as a crucial ally for the Assad regime in the Syrian civil war (Guzansky and Berti 2014). In turn, Szekely (2016) has also identified the implications of this alliance for the way Hizbullah asserts its presence in international relations in the region. As the author explained, although Hizbullah's involvement in the Syrian civil war was framed as "necessary to preserve the 'Axis of Resistance' for the fight against Israel", another key objective was clearly to preserve the Assad regime (Szekely 2016: 84). In turn, Szekely (2016) asserted that this foreign policy approach not only weakened Hizbullah's political position in Lebanon, but also contributed to the destabilisation of the country due to the massive influx of nearly 1.2 million Syrian refugees into Lebanon (by the end of 2015), comprising about 25 per cent of the total population.

Irrespective of whether Hizbullah's alliance with Syria has weakened its domestic position, the general view in the literature is that the Party increasingly

regards itself as a regional actor rather than just a resistance group. Hizbullah's decision making in regard to domestic and regional politics has clearly become more influenced by regional issues and not just resistance to Israel. Thus, the point reinforced by Szekely (2016: 85) is that the decision-making and strategic actions performed by the Party to strengthen its legitimacy and survival will increasingly aim to "balance a range of domestic concerns with equally complex issues of foreign policy" (Szekely 2016: 85).

Given the domestic, regional and international 'reach' of religion, its potential role in the decision making and strategic actions of Hizbullah warrant further research, particularly in relation to how religion is used as a tool for legitimacy in this domain. This will support a deeper level of understanding of how the Party integrates Islam into its domestic and worldviews, an important outcome given the potentially significant domestic and regional consequences from such integration. The following sections do however attempt to shed some light on the decision making and strategic actions of Hizbullah through a review of the literature on the Party's ideology and identity and the Party's decisions and actions may be explained by Social Mobilisation Theory.

3.5 Hizbullah Ideology and Identity

The predominant topic covered in the literature on Hizbullah is the complexity of its ideology and identity. For instance, in *Transcript Q&A: How Powerful is Hezbollah? Local, Regional and Global Implications*³⁰, Mathew Levitt (2013) introduced Hizbullah with the statement, "if you think Hizbullah is a terrorist group only, you are mistaken, and if you think Hizbullah is a resistance group only, you are also mistaken, Hizbullah is all of those, it is a hybrid movement". Hence, the literature on Hizbullah is as broad and open-ended as this statement suggests, with different perspectives on the Party's ideology, objectives and prospects. While numerous studies have emphasised the role that Hizbullah

³⁰Chatham House (2013) How powerful is Hezbollah? Local, regional and global implications (Transcript Q&A) available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Meetings/Meeting%20Transcripts/301013HezbollahQA.pdf> (accessed 2 June 2015).

plays as a regional actor, focusing particularly on its loyalty to Iran and Syria, the study of Hizbullah's religiosity has consistently fallen within the analysis of Party ideology, without considering its broad influence on Party strategy (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, Levitt 2013).

While some scholars have focused on Hizbullah's identity and formation, others have sought to focus on the Party's radical Islamism and to further examine its difference or similarities to other Islamist groups. Scholars such as Bordenkircher (2007: 1-28) examined the differences between *Jamaa al Islamiyah* (Islamic communion) and Hizbullah in terms of political participation and the common objective to establish an Islamic state. In addition, Sadiki (2010: 350-376) was one of many scholars who compared Hizbullah and Hamas, focusing on their resistance and the "*mojtama mokawem*" (society of resistance). While Bordenkircher (2007) and Sadiki (2010) each offered perceptive insights on this subject, this study does not cover the difference or similarities between Hizbullah and other Islamist groups in detail and does not adopt a comparative approach.

What was commonly found in the literature is depiction of Hizbullah as a committed and structured organisation. For example, Khashan and Moussawi (2007: 9) explained, "Hizbullah's military jihad integrates five components, which reflect both the challenges and opportunities that have crossed its path since 1982". In addition, Kramer (1994: 21) equated Hizbullah to medieval assassins, stating,

[...] More than any other fundamentalist movement in recent history, Hizbullah evoked the memory of the medieval Assassins, who had been feared in the West and Islam for their marriage of fierce militancy to destructive deeds. Like the Assassins, Hizbullah gave rise to an immense lore, and much confusion.

The following section briefly reviews the literature on Hizbullah's relation to *Welayet al-Faqih* and to the extent to which this relation influences Hizbullah's use of religion and its commitment to Islamist principles. A review of this literature is important to this thesis as it provides valuable insights into the extent to which the Party is bound to the ideological objectives of the doctrine and offers

further explanation of how Hizbullah operates within a religious framework. This relationship is revisited in Chapter 8 in this thesis' discussion of Hizbullah's relationship with Iran.

3.5.1 Hizbullah 's relation to *Welayet al-Faqih*

Saouli (2014: 26) identified that "it is important to emphasise that Hizbullah's commitment [to *Welayet al-Faqih*] is not a mere ideological and/or intellectual stand". In turn, the literature on Hizbullah's ideology and identity is heavily focused on the *Welayet al-Faqih* doctrine (See Chapters Three, Four and Eight of this thesis). On this topic, Moussawi (2011: 15), the head of Media Relations for Hizbullah asserted, "*Welayet al-Faqih* is not a fixed, closed system, but rather is a fluid concept that is open to a wide range of interpretations by a variety of Islamic clerics and scholars and draws from republican concepts such as constitutionalism, separation of powers, etc.". Moussawi (2011: 15) also asserted that "Shi'i Islam and its jurisprudence are progressive in nature, and allow for independent reasoning (*Ijtihad*), thus entailing a continuous evolution in religious thinking".

These ideas have also been highlighted in the work of Ibrahim Moussawi (2011), *Shi'ism and the Democratisation Process in Iran*, and Hassan Fadlallah (2015), *Hizbullah and the State in Lebanon: The Vision and the Path*. Both Moussawi and Fadlallah offer an insider's voice as official representatives of the Party. Moussawi presented the *Welayet al-Faqih* doctrine as a parallel to democracy, using Iran as his case study. He argued (2011: 48), "the *welaya* entails that the final say in all the societal and leadership exercises lies in the hands of the *wali al-Faqih* whose authority is absolute and irrevocable, thus it should be completely abided by". Notably, Moussawi does not apply the notion to Hizbullah and explains the process only in the context of Iran. Conversely, Fadlallah (2015: 32) explored how the principle of *Welayet al-Faqih* is developed in accordance with a country's (e.g. Lebanon) specific circumstances in which criteria such as respect for local government, adaptation to domestic political structures, and improving the local

community from within were set as benchmarks in the application of the principle.

According to Khashan and Moussawi (2007: 9), Hizbullah has adopted the Faqih doctrine in which *Welayet al-Faqih* is mandated to support the installation and empowerment of an Islamic government during the time of occultation. The premise underpinning this formulation endorses the creation of an Islamic community that is self-governed and led by the faqih until humanity is redeemed upon the return of the infallible twelfth Imam (Khashan and Moussawi 2007: 9). Another study of the ideology of Hizbullah was conducted by Qassem, the Deputy Secretary-General of Hizbullah since 1991; when writing about the organisation, Qassem (2010: 30-43) explained Hizbullah's relation to the *Welayet al-Faqih* doctrine and the Party's commitment to the higher *Jihad* as a religious resistance group (2010: 55-100)³¹. Qassem's book is an essential reading to understand how religion links to *Welayet al-Faqih* for Hizbullah as it represents an identification of the Party's ideological framework from within.

However, Hizbullah officials tend to suggest that even though the Party's ideological commitment is to the Wali, the Party's internal decision making is strictly separated from the Wali's intervention (Fadlallah 2015). As such, the Wali becomes essential only in global terms such as war, peace, and foreign policy. Hence, the question is left open as to the extent to which *Welayet al-Faqih* principles apply to Hizbullah; that is, how much is Hizbullah bound by, or affected by, the *Wali*. *Welayet al-Faqih* does not represent the focus of this research and should instead be addressed in a dedicated study. However, this research treats the notion of *Welayet al-Faqih* in Shi'ism as a platform for leaders such as Nasrallah to exercise exclusive authority using religious tools such as *taklif shari* and *fatwa* to mobilise fighters and support which will prove to be key for the Party's future involvement in regional conflicts such as the Syrian war.

³¹ For Hizbullah, there is a distinction between higher Jihad and lower Jihad. Higher Jihad denotes the self/personal purification from evil, and lower Jihad denotes fighting for God (military Jihad) (Saouli 2014; Khashan and Moussawi 2007).

As such, of interest to this thesis is the way in which Hizbullah has sought to procure social and political goods for Lebanese Shi'ites while simultaneously securitising religion "to mobilize vast numbers of supporters ... around a given political or social issue" (Malmvig 2015: 33). Social Mobilisation Theory can offer insights into the nature of this relationship.

3.6 Social Mobilisation Theory

As previously established, the primary intent in this thesis to adopt a multidisciplinary approach (e.g. security studies, terrorism studies, etc.) from the Social Sciences and Political Sciences fields to examine Hizbullah's use of religion for political advantage to attain specific political objectives. A brief exploration of Social Mobilisation Theory in this thesis is therefore warranted as it can contribute some theory-based insights from which to explore and explain the actions of the Party. Indeed, Social Mobilisation Theory is typically used to explain the mobilisation of individuals, groups or communities to action significant change. Focus is therefore often assigned to the ways in which the mobilisation manifests and its potential to achieve social, cultural, and political outcomes (Christiansen 2009: 1). Social mobilisation denotes particularly the mobilisation of members of groups (religious or civic) or community networks within the context of contentious politics, often as a form of political protest. As described by Klandermans (2013: 12), "social mobilization is the mechanism that brings demand and supply of protest together". In turn, Hoover and Johnston (2012) have asserted that the mobilisation of religion based on ethnicity, nationalism, and culture is a distinctive feature of modern times.

As a generalisation, Social Mobilisation Theory posits that the coordinated mobilisation of groups in response to clearly defined political complaints is not for the primary benefit of individuals, but rather to force changes in the broader socio-political context. In turn, it is asserted by Christiansen (2009: 2) that the motivations of individuals to engage in social movements oriented towards changing the norms in social-systems generally emerge from a personal

grievance with existing social structures. Issues of identity and quality of life are therefore typically at the centre of such coordinated social actions. Christiansen (2009: 2) further explained, the key assumption underpinning Social Mobilisation Theory is that the solidarity manifested through micro-political associations based on religion, ethnicity, gender etc. represents a type of social capital that can be utilised to mobilise social resources for change. Klandermans (2013) has therefore argued that social mobilisation focuses on factors such as persuasive communication techniques and their effectiveness, the mobilisation channels, the role played by social networks, and individual or collective perceptions of the costs and benefits of participation.

3.6.1 Four stages of social mobilisation

A view commonly endorsed in the literature is that social mobilisation (movement) development occurs across four stages: emergence, coalescence, bureaucratisation, and decline (e.g. Christiansen 2009; De la Porta & Diani, 2006). To elaborate, the 'emergence' stage of a social movement is typically contextualised within a period of widespread social discontent (Christiansen 2009: 1-2). As such, it has been referred to as the "social ferment" stage whereby potential movement participants are dissatisfied with social policy or social conditions (De la Porta & Diani, 2006: 150-152). Such discontent may be experienced at the individual level or be tied to a social movement organisation. Stage two of social movement development, the "coalescence" stage, is characterised by more clearly defined accounts of the reasons for the social discontent and the people or groups who are responsible (Christiansen 2009: 2-3). It is at this stage that the social discontent is believed to transition from the uncoordinated and individual to the focused and collective, primarily due to the emergence of leadership and strategies for action. Christiansen (2009: 2-3) further explained that the "bureaucratisation" stage of social movement development is characterised by the formalisation of the leadership structure and the coalition of strategies.

De la Porta and Diani (2006: 150-152) also examined the bureaucratisation of social movement organisation and reported that the key implication from such processes is that there is a core need for the social action to be coordinated in order for it to be most impactful on the social and political structures deemed in need of change. Lastly, the "decline" stage of a social movement represents its conclusion or institutionalisation. As argued by Christiansen (2009: 4) however, social movement decline should not necessarily be associated with social movement failure as the decline may potentially result from many different factors including success, failure or repression by a greater institutional power. In turn, while this thesis does not directly apply a Social Movement Theory lens to frame and explain the use of religion by Hizbullah, an appreciation of the four stages of social movement development is nonetheless useful to this research as the paradigm can be used "an analytic tool for understanding how collective action occurs" and the impact of the movement of society (Christiansen 2009: 4-5).

3.6.2 Consensus mobilisation and action mobilisation

A review of the literature on social mobilisation revealed the longstanding view among theorists and scholars that the mobilisation act itself comprises two core steps: consensus mobilisation and action mobilisation. According to Klandermans (1984: 586), consensus mobilisation is the process by which a social movement organisation such as Hizbullah may seek to gain support for its socio-political positions or perspectives. The actions taken by the movement to achieve these outcomes invariably involves four elements: establishing a collective good; articulating a movement strategy; confronting one's opponent; and achieving observable results. Klandermans (1984: 586) also argued that "the degree of success with which consensus is mobilized ... can be measured by the extent to which the collective goods are known and valued". In terms of action mobilisation, this is characterised as the processes undertaken by the social movement organisation to get people to participate (Klandermans 1984: 587). As such, action mobilisation is essentially a motivation agenda built around notions of the attractiveness of participation and the rewards of participation. According

to Klandermans (1984: 588), a mobilising social movement organisation will therefore “try to make the benefits of participation and the costs of nonparticipation as high as possible, and the costs of participation and the benefits of nonparticipation as low as possible”.

Notably, the literature on consensus and action mobilisation in Social Mobilisation Theory also points to the use of religious symbols and associations by mobilisation actors. On this issue, Patterson (2012: 120) has posited that religious symbols are often used as political objects to mobilise patrons or to shape the nature of conflict and security. For example, among several factors, the Ayatollah Khomeini’s use of Islamic symbols when calling for a theocratic government built on an Iranian identity, political order, and a historic Muslim, played a key role in resonating the message to the Iranian people (Patterson 2012: 120). Arguably, establishing a distinction between a true Iranian Islamic identity and the pagan (Persian) identity was the springboard from which his message was promoted (Berkley Centre for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs 2011: 9). In addition, the consolidation of religious identity and the subsequent generation of religious nationalism using religious concepts and symbols has been a core element of both the Zionist movement’s and the Palestinian national movement’s strategies to mobilise popular support. In turn, this thesis gives some consideration to the way in which Hizbullah’s operations reflect those of a social movement organisation through a reliance on religious symbols and associations to mobilise supporters towards the achievement of its political objectives.

3.7 Social Mobilisation Theory and Hizbullah

As previously established, several scholars including Dionigi (2014), Karagiannis (2009) and Azani (2009, 2010, 2011) have sought to examine and explain Hizbullah according to Social Mobilisation (Movement) Theory. Dionigi (2014: 186) summarised his study by “explaining the process by which Hizbullah has become subjected to international norms, especially focusing on the idea of international socialisation”. Dionigi’s argument complements the assertions of Azani (2009, 2010, 2011) and Karagiannis (2009); namely, that social

circumstances (and in Dionigi's case, international factors) have played a major part in the Party's change of politics from the hard-line Islamist discourse in the 1980s to a pragmatic and nationalistic tone in 2009. Indeed, Karagiannis (2009: 369) stated that "Hizballah is a SMO [Social Movement Organisation] since [...] the group has a number of highly committed members and it aims at political change". Both Dionigi (2014) and Karagiannis (2009) argue that Hizbullah's objectives and efforts to improve the condition of the Shi'ite community have presented it as a social movement organisation in which the movement constitutes two criteria: mobilising supporters for a common cause and developing political objectives that can change the situation for the collective good (Kriesi 1996: 152).

Given Klandermans' (1997: 2) description of a social movement as "collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with the elite and the authorities", it could be suggested that the collective Shi'ite experience of persecution has served to produce a need for a party such as Hizbullah to work towards the improvement of their situation. Nonetheless, Karagiannis (2009: 370) continues to explain that "Hizbullah's frames have become popular because they draw their legitimacy from the Quran and other Islamic sacred texts"³². Sidney Tarrow (Cited in Goodwin and Jasper 2015:112) argues that 'because it is so reliable a source of emotion', religion is a recurring source of social movement framing". Hence, it may be argued that religion has become an essential element of the Party's social movement development strategy because it is tied to politics and the deployment of violence in the pursuit of political power. However, it should be noted that while Social Mobilisation Theory is embedded at times into the multidisciplinary approach in this thesis to explain the developmental phases of Hizbullah as a social movement organisation, it does not explain explicitly how religion has become such an instrumental element in Hizbullah's political strategy. What is more

³² In this quote, Karagiannis (2009) makes reference to Hizbullah's policies and decision-making.
Literature Review

explicitly discussed in the literature is the political pragmatism adopted by the Party and its implications for mobilising its supporters.

3.7.1 Hizbullah's pragmatism: Resistance group and political party

A considerable number of studies have been conducted on Hizbullah and its internal operations as a developing party (e.g. Saad-Ghorayeb 2003; Harik 2004), especially its use of pragmatism as a political tool to integrate into the Lebanese political system. Indeed, numerous scholars have suggested that Hizbullah's pragmatism (when adopting the *infatah*-opening/Lebanonisation policy - See Chapter One of this thesis) has contributed to its success as a resistance-political party and its capacity to mobilise support (Al-Agha 2006, 2011, 2013; Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 2003; Saouli 2014).

The history of Hizbullah and its relations with the Shi'ite community has been the focus of scholarly discussion and research analysis for many years (Traboulsi 2007; Norton 2007). This scholarly literature may in turn be examined for the extent to which Hizbullah is presented as an example of how religion and politics are mutually important in forming the Party's realpolitik. Such an examination is warranted given the central premise of this thesis is that religion and politics operate as intertwined rather than separate elements (as explained by Realist theory) in the actions of non-State actors such as Hizbullah in the Middle East.

This thesis argues that religion is an essential element in Hizbullah's political pragmatism. Indeed, Karagiannis (2009) and Azani (2009, 2010, 2011) have both claimed that Hizbullah's identity as a Shi'ite group is not enough to explain the Party's pragmatic identity. Karagiannis (2009: 370) explained that "Hizbullah's frames have become popular because they draw their legitimacy from the Quran and other Islamic sacred texts". This is an important consideration in light of Sidney Tarrow's (cited in Goodwin and Jasper 2015: 112) assertion that religion is a source of social movement framing. The author also indicated that religion offers ready-made symbols and customs that can be mobilised and used by party leaders.

Hence, a consistent view to emerge in the literature (e.g. Azani 2009, 2010, 2011; Karagiannis 2009) is that Hizbullah, as a political movement, generally regards politics to be inseparable from religion and thus utilises violence for political rather than ritualistic objectives; that is, to increase its power base. However, while the authors discussed above offer insights into the emergence of Hizbullah as an actor in the region, they do not explain in detail how religion is used pragmatically in the Party's political strategy. The authors have not closely examined the instances where the Party has employed *ijtihad* in order to justify its intervention in the Syrian war. Additionally, Nasrallah's use of *taklif shari* for political reasons such as the May 8 clash (see Chapters Three, Four and Five for further discussion) has also been overlooked by these authors.

Nevertheless, the literature does point to the marginalisation of Shi'ites in Lebanon as a key element in Hizbullah's pragmatic approach (Khatib et al. 2014; Saad-Ghorayeb 2002; Norton 2007). The general view among authors is that the Party recognised early that combining elements of religious indoctrination with social/financial support would ensure ongoing backing from people who are often left marginalised. In evaluating such claims, the actions of Nasrallah are worth considering. For instance, Nasrallah was open about the Lebanese government's neglect of Shi'ite areas in Lebanon, as evidenced in his speech celebrating the "divine victory" in Baalbek, in 2007. In it he reminded listeners of the political path forming in the region under Imam *Sayyid* al-Sadr in the early 1970s.

Furthermore, it is important to note the assertion from Nasrallah that addressing Shi'ite disadvantage in the north is less about a political choice and more about changing the "governing mentality" in Lebanon. By making this assertion, Nasrallah is clearly attempting to position governance in Lebanon as separate to "political consideration, religious denomination or community affiliation".³³

³³ Alahed News (2007) Sayyed Nasrallah's speech at divine victory celebration at Baalbeck, available at: <http://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetailsf.php?eid=740&fid=11> (accessed 3 January 2014).

Nonetheless, when addressing the issue of the marginalisation of Lebanese people residing in the northern and southern border areas, it is notable that Volk (2009: 263-282) compared Sunni marginalisation in the north and Shi'ite marginalisation in the south. However, for the purposes of this thesis, primary focus is on the political participation and representation of Hizbullah members that are usually, but not always, Shi'ite (Farida 2010: 71-77).

On the issue of pragmatism, Saad-Ghorayeb (2002: 35-80) discussed Hizbullah's emergence from an Islamist group into a political party in *Hizbullah: Politics and Religion*. The author offered perceptive insights into Hizbullah's politics, ideology and connections to Iran. Notably, she described Hizbullah's flexibility in decision making and provided the reader with an understanding of the Party's political commitment to Lebanon rather than to Iran (2002: 35-80). It is thus important to re-visit Saad-Ghorayeb's book when studying Hizbullah as it offers a basic understanding and explanation of the Party. As argued by the author, even though the Party remains loyal to the Iranian regime, it nevertheless puts considerable effort in creating an independent Lebanese identity. This argument will be revisited in looking at the Party's regional alliances in addition to its Lebanonisation process (See Chapters Seven and Eight).

Sobelman (2004), in his text, *New Rules of the Game: Israel and Hizbollah after the Withdrawal from Lebanon*, has also contributed important insights into Hizbullah's pragmatism in the context of the Party's need for acceptance and support within Lebanese society. Highlighting the relationship between pragmatism and legitimacy for Hizbullah is the assertion from Ehud Barak (cited in Sobelman 2004: 44), the former Israeli Prime Minister, that "even in their behaviour while they were fighting against us in south Lebanon you could see their obsession with legitimacy for each and every operation. This is why I understood that the legitimacy factor is more important than it seems." Adding to the school of thought on this issue is Uzi Dayan (cited in Sobelman 2004: 45). In the following quote, the author highlights the importance of public opinion to Hizbullah:

Hizbullah will not operate in a way that angers the Lebanese people; that is, it will not act against public opinion and the (mood of the) street, and will not create a situation in which it is perceived as an enemy of the Lebanese people, or act contrary to its socio-political interests in Lebanon.

Bayat (2010) assessed Hizbullah's development and entry into the Lebanese political system as "transcending its Islamist platform" (2010: 246). In turn, claims such as these that point to the Party's reliance on different platforms led Levitt (2014) for instance to describe Hizbullah as a hybrid party capable of being a political party and a fundamentalist Islamist group. Arguably, hybridity in this sense provides a suitable platform for political pragmatism as the Party can draw on different political or religious tools to justify its actions. This sentiment is reflected in Saouli's (2011: 925-942) claim that pragmatism helped to speed up Hizbullah's integration into Lebanese society.

Al-Agha (2011: 54) has also asserted that Hizbullah shifted its ideology to better assimilate into Lebanese politics. Implied in the assertion is that the only way for Hizbullah to have a continued presence was to become a political party rather than remain a resistance group (Al-Agha 2011: 54-56). Al-Agha's argument goes hand in hand with the arguments put forward by Harik (2004) and Saad-Ghorayeb (2002). In addition, Karagiannis (2009: 369-375) argued a similar point, suggesting the social framework of Hizbullah was vital to its continued success. Although the author posited the Party's success was largely due to the ideological indoctrination of Islam and its commitment to *Wali el-Faqih*, it is also worth noting the importance placed on Hizbullah's transition to a political party.

Harb and Leenders (2005) referred to Hizbullah's transition towards pragmatism as the "Lebanonisation processes". In turn, Rabil (2012: 49-64) suggested that the Lebanonisation process (transformation of Hizbullah into a Lebanese party) started as soon as Israeli troops withdrew from southern Lebanon in May, 2000. By this time, Hizbullah had won its armed struggle against Israel and was now a Lebanese political party with military credibility, a huge military arsenal, and

highly trained military members. It is interesting to note that when commenting on Hizbullah's decision to join the Lebanese parliamentary elections in 1992, scholars such as Norton (2007), Harik (2004), and Hamzeh (2004) argued that the Lebanonisation of Hizbullah would eventually see it converted into a conventional Lebanese political party doomed to internal divisiveness (cited in Hoover 2007: 46-68). This is particularly interesting for this thesis as it sheds light on the way in which the Party's pragmatic action taking is underpinned by religious notions; namely, the uses of *ijtihad* in its reasoning to participate in the Lebanese parliament, to Lebanise the Party's identity, and to justify its intervention in Syria.

Based on the complexities surrounding Hizbullah's pragmatism, Rabil (2012), Hoover (2007), and Harb and Leenders (2005) have claimed that the Party is a unique case that needs further study as it distinctly illustrates an Islamist resistance group's transformation into a conventional party with political and social demands. Rabil (2012: 49-64) for instance gave importance to Hizbullah's hierarchical structure as a bottom-up rather than a top-down model. Furthermore, Harb and Leenders (2005: 173-197) argued that Hizbullah has had success with its military struggle against Israel and has operated an essential network of social services which serve to organise the Shi'ite community in Lebanon into a "society of resistance." This network was in turn the cornerstone of their success in the Lebanese parliament elections in 1992.

In sum, the literature revealed that Hizbullah's pragmatism is a particularly interesting aspect of Middle Eastern politics for political scientists working in the field as it offers an unusual case of an Islamist party successfully developing into a prominent political party. For many scholars, Hizbullah has been characterised as a party that has been able to "stay true" to its ideology despite its involvement in domestic politics. What is notable, however, is that even though writers such as Harik (2004: 63-93) tackled the political pragmatism of Hizbullah, the author did not examine the effect of religion on Hizbullah's political strategy. Also, Klaushofer (2007) identified the provision of social services as a key indicator to

Hizbullah's success but failed to tackle the Party's religious and sectarian commitment. Moreover, the literature on Hizbullah offers different explanations of the Party's ideology – from the Party's commitment to *Welayet el-Faqih* to its decision to open-up – but it nevertheless does not present religion as a key factor in this adaptability. The use of religion in Hizbullah's case thus remains largely unexplored.

3.7.2 Hizbullah, religion and social mobilisation

This thesis starts from the point that Hizbullah uses Islamist discourse for two distinct purposes: to improve the condition of the Shi'ite community in Lebanon (i.e. to create a just and equal society); and to increase its legitimacy as a resistance movement against Israel. In turn, an attempt is then made to demonstrate how the party's use of religion in these ways relates to its pragmatic approach to political decision making and the mobilisation of its supporters. For instance, the Party's use of *ijtihad* to facilitate a pragmatic approach to how it fights against Israel, and the Party's uses of *taklif shari* to mobilise fighters.

The key question is thus how the Party is able to implement and reconcile the competing religious and political interests and what are the short-term and long-term implications. Previous research provides little information on Hizbullah's use of religion within the broader context of its political pragmatism. In fact, the literature is quite silent when it comes to an examination of the theoretical foundation underpinning the role of religion in Hizbullah's identity. As such, important questions remain unanswered: is Hizbullah's decision making influenced by its religious identity?

Abukhalil (1991) examined the ability of organisations to use Islam as a pretext to promote their political aims. In doing so, the author provided an interesting insight into the similarity between Khomeini's Islamic revolution in 1979 and Marxism. Even though Abukhalil presented Hizbullah as a similar example to the Iranian strategy, he did not comprehensively address the aim of using Islam as a pretext for political gain. This is important because Hizbullah's political

statements and parliamentary representation reveal that it believes it has earned broader popularity due to its acceptance and assimilation into the Lebanese political system.

Dionigi (2014), Karagiannis (2009), Kramer (1994), and Azani (2009, 2010, 2011) have indicated that religion is the core element of Hizbullah, and that Hizbullah follows *Welayet al-Faqih* or religious authority. Moreover, they argued that the Party's adaptability or pragmatism finds a place in the sect's theological notion of *ijtihad*. However, while *Welayet al-Faqih* is established as an essential element in Hizbullah's ideology, little attention is paid to the role and the significance of religion in Hizbullah's everyday politics and how it is employed for the mobilisation of Shi'ites, the pursuit of legitimacy, and the consolidation of political power. Indeed, most of the literature on Hizbullah has focused on its stages of development rather than on religion as an essential element in its identity.

An argument to emerge in the literature is that the political agenda projected by Hizbullah to better serve and safeguard Shi'ite status in Lebanon (especially through social services) reflects a religious element found in the Shi'ites' sect. Arguably, the collective Shi'ite experience of persecution served to produce the need for a party such as Hizbullah to work towards the improvement of their situation. In *Pity the Nation*, Fisk (1990: 12-48) stated that the victimisation of Lebanese Shi'ites was the result of the tragic ancient battle of Karbala where Imam Hussein (the grandson of the Prophet) suffered a violent death at the hands of Yazid's army (the second Omayyad Khalif). The narrative of deprivation and persecution felt by Shi'ites allowed Hizbullah to use this sense of political and social isolation to construct a "collective Shi'ite identity" to achieve and maintain hegemony over this group (See Chapters Six and Seven of this thesis). It was for these reasons that prominent Shi'ite leaders such as Imam Musa Al-Sadr and Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah began to demand better rights for Shi'ites.

In addition, the works of Fisk (1990) and Norton (2007) have highlighted how the Party's cult of martyrdom revolves around the heroic figure of Imam Hussein, which it uses as a role model for sacrifice. As such, both Fisk's and Norton's works establish the contextual background to Shi'ite' persecution and the way it is instrumental in Hizbullah's political rhetoric. However, these works do not explain how Hizbullah has used Shi'ite *Karbali* (in reference to the battle of Karbala) rhetoric to mobilise the Shi'ite community. Moreover, there are recurring references to fear and reminders of Shi'ite victimisation in a number of statements by Nasrallah. Some of the statements issued by Nasrallah implied that there is an international-Arab intention to eliminate Hizbullah (cited in Makdisi 2011)

The use of religious rhetoric by Hizbullah became increasingly evident from its Open Letter in 1985 to the Political Manifesto in 2009. The Open Letter described the present Lebanese system as arrogant and unjust to the point that it was beyond "reform or modification". As such, a radical change was needed if Muslims were to participate in a just regime based upon Islamic prescriptions [*ahkam*] and *Shari'a* law as told by the Prophet Mohammed (Hizbullah, 1985; cited in Karagiannis 2009: 370-371).

Hizbullah's change in political direction rested on the decision to participate in the 1992 parliamentary elections as indicated by Qassem (2010: 271-277):

It is now imperative to cooperate with other devoted parties in order to complete the necessary steps towards . . . the forging of internal peace on the basis of political concord that is furthest as could be from abominable sectarian biases or narrow confessional discriminations.

The Party then continued its change of rhetoric as it became more involved in the political process. During the 1996 election campaign, the Party issued its program to achieve justice and equality for all Lebanese people by building a strong, dignified, and prosperous country (Hamzeh 2004). This would in turn engage all Lebanese in the construction of a country that has equality of opportunity for all

people irrespective of class, duties, or political persuasion (Hizbullah, 1996; cited in Karagiannis 2009: 374).

While the Political Manifesto in 2009 included a revisionary look at the Party's nationalistic identity, the limitation of this document is that it does not explain how Hizbullah uses religion and religious tools such as *taklif shari* and its Islamic *ijtihad* in its political mobilisation. The Party's 1991 electoral campaign and the 2009 political manifesto indicate its strategy to open-up and to change the tone of its rhetoric, which serves the hypothesis suggested by Dionigi (2014), Karagiannis (2009) and Azani (2009). It nonetheless does not articulate if the Party changed its strategic objectives through the employment of religion. Moreover, it does not offer an insight into how *ijtihad*, for example, was adopted in the Party's adaptability.

It is also asserted in the literature that Hizbullah needed to use religion to increase its influence in Lebanon (Khatib et al. 2014; Dionigi 2014; Hamzeh 2004). As Kramer (1994: 36) argued, the main driving force of Hizbullah was to implement Islamic law. To achieve this, the Party had to operate within the parameters of Islamic law as understood by the clerics. As stated by Sheikh Abd al-Karim Ubayd – a Hizbullah cleric abducted by Israel in 1989, “The Muslim fighter needed answers to many questions” (Kramer 1994: 36) related to the obligatory nature of resistance to the occupation (in terms of religious obligation) and to the notion of self-martyrdom. Thus, the role of the Cleric was crucial as these questions could only be answered according to law, not to politics. Indeed, the Clerics' answers were an “essential contribution” to fighters' understanding of the legitimacy of the violence answers that could not be provided by the military commander.

In addition, Saade (2015) offered insights into the way Hizbullah's media outlets, *Al-Ahd* newspaper, operated as a propaganda machine to construct the ideology of “martyrology”. Saade (2015) suggests that the concept of martyrdom has almost become synonymous with Hizbullah's ideology whereby the ideology of

Hizbullah is framed within, and augmented by, martyrdom indoctrination. Saade's work echoes the work conducted by Norton (2007), Hamzeh (2004), Khatib (2013), and Harik (2004), which indicates that Hizbullah's cult of martyrdom has assisted the Party in its propaganda against Israel. Therefore, there needs to be further scrutiny of the aspects of "martyrology" being used by Hizbullah in its discourse. This ideology is set to be the main factor behind the Party's recruitment program and political activism. The use of Islamic doctrines, and specifically the Imam Hussein martyrdom episode, have been instrumental in the Party's resistance against Israel forces, domesticating its political mission, and in its formulation of a "society/culture of resistance" (Harb and Leenders 2005).

Sayyid Fadlallah, Sheikh Shams al-Din, and *Sayyid* Musa al-Sadr were key figures in the development of Shi'ite resistance and organisation (Sankari 2005; Nasr 2007). *Sayyid* Fadlallah stated that "the engendering of conscious and committed Muslim individuals in society would constitute the first phase in creating a true Islamic society, through the nurturing of fraternal Islamic ties and the insemination in the collective psyche of Islamic precepts and values, such as social justice, equality and solidarity" (Dionigi 2014: 89). Fadlallah here underscores clearly the role of the clerics and Islamic discourse in the development both of party policy in the present and its propagation in future social structures. In turn, the perceived links between religious discourse and Party policy is important to the investigation in this thesis of the role of religious figures (i.e. Nasrallah) in political decision making and action taking, especially in relation to their use of religious tool (see Chapter Three for a discussion of the relationship between *fatwa* and politics).

3.7.2.1 *Recruitment processes*

According to Blanford (2011), several factors contribute to Hizbullah's power including faith (religion), commitment (*A'kida-* sect), resistance, and representation (politics). Hizbullah's success lies in its ability to draw each of

these factors together. This thesis focuses primarily on religion as a factor of influence in Hizbullah, while also exploring the implications of the connection between “deep faith” and power for the Party’s attempts to fulfil its resistance and political agendas. In turn, it is necessary to further explore the links between religion and the recruitment processes engaged in by Hizbullah to enhance its power as a non-state actor.

A review of the literature reveals only a few scholars have investigated Hizbullah’s recruitment processes, most likely due to the secretive nature of the organisation. Nonetheless, Hizbullah recruitment process is central to its capacity to mobilise Lebanese Shi’ites. James Love, a former American military officer, studied Hizbullah’s sources of power in detail. He provided a picture of Hizbullah’s distribution of funds and facilities and how the facilities were used for recruitment. According to Love (2010: 1-36), the technique used by Hizbullah was influenced by the models of recruitment for guerrilla warfare used by Mao Zedong and Che Guevara. This may be true of the Party during its initial stages as a guerrilla movement, however its emergence as an influential political group in Lebanon forced Hizbullah to change its model of recruitment to meet the respective challenges; namely the Israeli threat. Blanford (2011: 30-80) also recounted stories of the recruitment of military personnel by Hizbullah. His paper contributes significantly to the study of Hizbullah’s recruitment machine and its benefits, however, Blanford’s main theme was Hizbullah’s use of Islamist indoctrination, essentially ignoring the internal political dimension.

In *A privilege to Die*, Cambanis (2010: 16) explored the lives of Hizbullah fighters to try to understand their motivation and how they lived their lives. After interviewing some fighters, the author concluded that the secret to Hizbullah’s success was that “its followers *believe*”. The author goes on to suggest that the way in which Hizbullah has convinced its followers to think about God and the enemy has ensured their goals and behaviours align with the Party’s ideology. As a result, the politics of resistance converge with the religious ideal of total commitment to one’s God, and is reinforced by the ongoing war,

authoritarianism, and a belief that strength comes from military superiority (Cambanis 2011: 16). Thus, the hypothesis in this thesis that Hizbullah employs religion and religious tools to better pursue its political goals is demonstrated to some degree in Cambanis' assertions. The key consideration in this hypothesis is how the Party exploits religious tools to legitimise or justify its decisions and action taking, and this can be explored through the Party's recruitment processes.

Indeed, when considered from this perspective, recruitment emerges as a crucial factor in explaining the ongoing resilience of the Hizbullah socio-political structure. This is evident in the assertions from Smyth (2015: 6) regarding the implications of Hizbullah's involvement in the Syrian war. According to the author, the extent of the human loss suffered by Hizbullah compelled the Party to expand its recruitment network and to try to promote *jihad* in Syria for "the protection of *Sayyida* Zainab shrine". As the author explains, the rhetoric surrounding the need to protect the *Sayyida* Zainab shrine was included in slogans to mobilise fighters in Syria. This had the effect of ensuring that the *Sayyida* Zainab shrine remained the epicentre for Shi'ites in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, with defence of the al-Askari shrine becoming the war cry for Shi'ite *jihadists* in Iraq (Smyth 2015: 6).

Furthermore, Smyth (2015) has provided valuable insights into the way social media platforms have been utilised by Hizbullah to reinforce the ties between religion and the Party's broader political aims. For instance, he indicated that the drive to recruit Shi'ites to fight in Syria was conducted through social media, advertising posters, and phone calls. The report stated that the recruitment and organising of Shi'ite militias in Syria has relied heavily on the Internet and phone hotlines. These insights from Smyth (2015) add to the illustrations in the literature of Hizbullah's use of religion as part of its overall strategy to increase its strength as a resistance / political movement in Lebanon. In addition, the author alluded to the importance of Hizbullah's use of social media platforms to progress its resistance and political agendas (e.g. providing details of the combat engagements of militia groups, to make martyrdom announcements, and for

fundraising purposes). The role of the media as a social mobilisation tool in general and as a tool used by Hizbullah to 'securitise' religion is discussed in further detail below.

3.7.3 Hizbullah's use of media as a social mobilisation tool

Marsden and Savigny (2012: 204) have pointed to the role of the media in shaping our understanding of the securitisation of religion; that is, religion in a security context. They argued that there is little doubt that news media and social media platforms play an ever-increasing role in "mediating ... the religion-security nexus" in international affairs. In terms of global security for instance, Islam for instance has been constructed by the Western media as "an existential threat to a Western way of life" that must be managed both ideologically and militarily (Marsden and Savigny 2012: 208). In turn, ideological, societal, and military securities emerge as key points of focus. Conversely, these security points of focus emerge as the priority concerns at the regional or national security level for Islamic countries which regard the perceived existential threat from the West. Hence, religion may be relatively easily securitised; that is, constructed as a security issue when contradictory religious values (at the ideological and societal level) appear to be, or actually are, threatening one's own religious norms and values (Marsden and Savigny 2012: 208). Notably, there has been considerable effort by Hizbullah to present itself as a political entity as well as an Islamist resistance group. In turn, the establishment of a major institutional network including media outlets and engagement in socio-political activities have been central to these efforts.

Zisser (2009) and Norton (2007) both paid close attention to the decline in Hizbullah's support following the 2006 war with Israel and the resultant limiting of their ambitions in the country. However, while Norton (2007: 476-489) focused on the internal/regional obstacles faced by Hizbullah,³⁴ Zisser (2009: 1-13) was

³⁴ This was also covered by Parkin and Kainikara's (2007: 29-50) report on the Lebanon-Israel war of 2006 and its strategic outcomes. Reports by the International Institute for Strategic Studies in 2010 also

more focused on the impact of the Lebanon-Israeli conflict and on Hizbullah's portrayal of the 2006 war in the media. A key point made by the author however is that the 2006 war was the first indication of a decline in Hizbullah's support, pointing to the way Nasrallah had lost his appeal as leader due to this gamble.

The issue of how Hizbullah employed its developing media skills to securitise its religious-political position was also the topic of El-Houri's analysis (2010: 91-200). El-Houri (2010: 2) explained that Hizbullah's central discourse – from a critical perspective – demonstrated the ethical dilemmas inherent to resistance strategies. Moreover, the author argued that as a socially conservative movement its strategies and politics exemplified “the rise of political Islam as a new global force as well as the growing counter-hegemonic political movements in the world in general” (El-Houri 2010: 2). In turn, one can argue that such claims by these authors highlight how Hizbullah's success as a movement is derived from its ability to present a model of resistance in its media discourse that engages people from diverse backgrounds and with varying political views. El-Houri (2010) also emphasised the role that the *Al-Manar* television station played in presenting Hizbullah as a prominent political party. Importantly, the author draws the reader's attention to the important role that the *Al-Manar* television network and the *Al-Nour* radio station play in enabling the Party to reach out to the Shi'ite community in Lebanon.

Arguably, the studies by Zisser (2009) and El-Houri (2010) were limited in regards to the implications of the 2006 war for Hizbullah's image and credibility. While they are crucial factors in the Party's test of moral reasoning, the studies failed to explain the reasoning behind the decision to kidnap the two Israeli soldiers (that was followed by the 2006 war), or the Party's use of *ijtihad* in this reasoning.

Similarly, Khatib (2013) and Khatib et al. (2014) examined the communication strategy used by Hizbullah to promote its agenda. Khatib's work was essential

discussed the implications of Hizbullah's strategic capabilities. In addition, Harel and Issacharoff (2008: 82-90) reviewed the policy implications of the 2006 Hizbullah-Israel war.

to this research as it highlighted the importance of discourse to the Party's branding success. Specifically, Khatib et al. (2014: 5) argued that the communication strategy employed by Hizbullah laid the foundation for its political development and continuation as a movement. According to the author, the management of its "image" has always been important to Hizbullah as it is seen as fundamental to establishing its legitimacy as a Party, reaching out to followers, and to implementing its political goals (Khatib et al. 2014: 5-7). Thus, the political and cultural mobilisation of the Party is inextricably linked to the establishment of an Islamic state derived from the political communications and actions of the clerics (Khatib et al. 2014: 5).

Khatib et al. (2014) also drew attention to the role of Hizbullah's Secretary-General, Nasrallah, as "the central actor" in the Party's decision-making process and in the success of the Party's communication strategy. The authors referred to this notion as the "branding of Nasrallah". Interestingly, Khatib's study covers Hizbullah's campaign and the effect of Nasrallah as the "defining feature of its [the Party's] communication strategy since its inception in 1982" (Khatib et al. 2014: 7).

However, Hizbullah's use of the media to mobilise fighters and supporters was not restricted to its rhetoric of resistance against Israel. The Party also operated its media programs as recruitment tools. Therefore, Hizbullah's use of the media should receive greater attention from scholars, especially the discourse related to both propaganda and recruitment. As Smyth (2015: 27) indicated, Nasrallah acknowledged during May 2013 the involvement of Hizbullah forces in Syria, thus showing that the Party's online recruitment efforts were active. Initially launched by Iran in Iran, the Party's Facebook pages, blogs, and messaging etc. featured the Hizbullah symbol alongside an image of the dome of *Sayyida Zainab* and the statement, "Zainab, we are all your Abbas". Moreover, phone numbers were included for recruitment along with further links to the site.

However, Smyth (2015: 28) also warned that “while ISIS’ social media-based recruitment has been the topic of discussion and focus by Western intelligence agencies and media, very little attention has been paid to Hizbullah’s [Shi’ite] incredibly open and active recruitment techniques”. Therefore, Hizbullah’s growing role as a transnational Shi’ite group requires further exploration given the group’s use of the religious narrative of Karbala to help mobilise fighters in Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria. As Smyth (2015: 30) claimed, the most common poster designs were those that showed the names of *Kataib Hizbullah*, *Liwa Dhulfiqar*, and Lebanese Hizbullah attached to faces of Afghan Shi’ites. This suggests that an active recruitment program was underway for these groups and suggests the links with Iran. The Badr organisation also posted phone numbers and the group names on Facebook and displayed pamphlets in Iraqi Shi’ite communities (Smyth 2015: 30).

Hizbullah’s use of media outlets as part of its resistance rhetoric also proved successful during the early years of the Party’s struggle against Israel. In addition, the role of the Party’s leader conveys the pragmatic face of the Party, which started with the *infatah* policy (opening up) at the start of Nasrallah’s leadership in 1992, paving the way for the development of the Party’s political identity and its integration into Lebanese society. Notably, these studies (Khatib et al. 2014; Smyth 2015) do not place emphasis on the tools employed by Hizbullah to support its political communication strategy. While these studies have proved useful resources for a contextual analysis of Nasrallah’s speeches, the thesis extends their usefulness by analysing the themes and content of Nasrallah’s statements. Specifically, this study thematically codes and analyses Nasrallah’s speeches rather than simply focusing on the circumstantial factors underpinning Hizbullah’s campaign. This method has not been used in the literature on Hizbullah and it can work towards unfolding other factors to explain Hizbullah’s social and political success.

3.8 Conclusion

There is a paucity of literature on the role that religion plays in Hizbullah's domestic and regional strategic actions. Nonetheless, a review of the available literature on security studies, terrorism studies, and contemporary IR theory in this chapter goes some way to contextualising Hizbullah's transition from resistance group to political party while retaining both its religious identity and its insurgency agenda. Notably, religion is discussed as a phenomenon that non-state actors often exploit to define their legitimacy and to mobilise their supporters. In turn, some consideration of the concepts in Social Mobilisation Theory is undertaken at times in this thesis to support a comprehensive (i.e. multidisciplinary) study of the role that religion plays in Hizbullah's capacity to establish a resistance culture, develop effective political campaigning practices, and to stake an important regional position. However, this review also demonstrates that the literature fails to adequately address the impact of the Party's employment of religion in its political strategy. It is therefore crucial to examine how Hizbullah exercises these tools in everyday domestic politics and in strategic politics such as the intervention in Syria, its objective to strengthen its domestic role through a change in power sharing, and in its increased regional status. The interconnection between religion and politics in Islam is the focus of the next chapter.

4 *Fatwa* and Politics

“God is back” (Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2010).

“Whoever gives *fatwa* without knowledge, the angels of the heaven and the earth curse him” (Prophet Mohammed; cited in The Islamic Supreme Council of America, n.d.)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains with illustrative examples why concepts derived from Islamic studies such as *fatwa*, *ijtihad*, and *Taqiyyah* are useful to explain Hizbullah and its use of religion in politics. As such, it also seeks to discuss how religion is employed for political purposes by state and non-state actors in the Middle East. *Fatwa* is given specific scrutiny as it is the end result or product of an *ijtihad* process and can be considered a religious verdict used in politics and social circumstances. Taking the case of Hizbullah as the primary example, focus is given to the Party’s use of *fatwas* as part of its structure and operations and how religion, as employed in its political strategy, is essential to its success. In doing so, this chapter argues that Hizbullah’s adaptive and pragmatic nature is associated with its use of religious tools such as *fatwa*, *ijtihad*, and *Taqiyyah* which ultimately position religion as the overarching element in Hizbullah’s political identity.

The importance of exploring the interconnection between religion and politics in relation to Hizbullah’s use of *fatwas* and other religious tools emerges from the broader context of Islamic fundamentalism. Radical ideologies and fundamentalism linked to Islam have become prominent in international discourse in recent decades in response to the emergence of groups such as Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS), Boko Haram, and others. Members of these groups claim that they are fighting a *jihad*, a holy war,

and thus have a religious justification to further their cause and recruit additional members. Notably, groups such as ISIS use religious indoctrination to maintain control over captured territories and have issued *fatwa* with all the force that such a religious decree entails. As such, the *fatwa* has afforded groups such as ISIS the opportunity to exercise power and rule over captured territories under the guise of religious justifications.

The key argument of this chapter is that there is a clear fusion in Islam between religious tenets and politics. As such, religious figures seem to have a participatory and influential role in politics. This chapter begins with an explanation of how religion and politics are intertwined rather than separate in Islam. Following this, the definitions, functions and origins of *fatwa* are explained. The discussion then shifts to an exploration of how the functionality of *fatwa* works for groups such as Hizbullah, including whether Hizbullah in fact uses *fatwa* or if it simply resorts to other religious tools. As such, this chapter lays the foundation for a more in-depth exploration of Hizbullah's pragmatism in the following chapter as evidenced through its use of different religious tools.

4.2 Islam and Politics

A key point of focus in this thesis is the nature of the 'participatory' role Islam plays in politics in the Lebanon and the Middle East region more broadly. The underlying premise of the discussion is that the relationship between religion and politics in Islam is one of fusion rather than separation (Norris and Inglehart 2011: 95). The beginnings of this fusion stem back centuries. Following the Prophet Mohammed's death, numerous successors ruled Muslims, adopting the title of *Khalifa* (caliph). However, after the Mongol invasion of Baghdad in 1258, the emergence of religious scholars (or *Ulama*) adopting the role of political advisors to secular rulers was to mark a shift in the religious-political dynamic in Islam (Roy 2004). This development eventually shaped Sunni political theory and religion and politics became intertwined.

The role of religion in the expression of political authority also shifted following the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Empire in 1453 (Roy 2004). This is evidenced in the way the Ottoman Sultan held both religious authority by assigning himself as caliph and political authority in the role of Sultan (Philpot et al. 2011: 64). Hence, religion and politics in Islam have historically been intimately intertwined, with Islam having a direct effect on politics in Muslim societies. In turn, it is perhaps not surprising that scholars who have underestimated the role of religion in politics have had their views challenged in recent years (Philpot et al. 2011: 1).

Some scholars such as Fox, Sandler, and Keohane (2011: 8), as well as numerous “neo-atheist” writers, have acknowledged that religion has not vanished, and claim to be “alarmed by its persistence” and potential influence on global politics. It is certainly well-documented that two important events shaped American foreign policy over recent decades (and the Western perspective of the Middle East). First, the Iranian Revolution in 1979 which involved the American hostage crisis that lasted for 444 days and which marked the beginning of a major “re-alignment of Middle East Politics” (Philpot et al. 2011: 3). Second, the attacks of September 11, 2001 which resulted in the Bush Administration’s declaration of a “war on terror” and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. In both cases, Islamist radicalism was the common factor and both events instigated growing demands from a segment of the Muslim community to create regimes that promote Islamic law (Sharia law) both at home and around the world (Khashan and Moussawi 2007; Kramer 1994).

As such, Keohane (2010; cited in Philpot et al. 2011) argued that after 9/11 the world should keep in mind that religious belief can fuel violence and that we should always be mindful of its implications for political decision-making. Keohane also emphasised the need for analysts to understand the main drivers of the violence and events in the field. In addition, Philpot et al. (2011: 8) assert that:

If scholars, journalists, educators, and public intellectuals have come to realise by now *that* religion matters, they have only begun to understand *how* religion matters and whether it is likely to bring violence or peace, division or unity, progress or decline. But such an understanding is crucial for grasping contemporary global politics. Whether one is a maker of foreign policy, a business person conducting global commerce, a scholar of politics, economics, or culture, an advocate for economic development or human rights, a doctor fighting disease overseas, a translator, a missionary, or simply a world traveller, one cannot afford to ignore religion's resurgent political power in its almost infinitely varied manifestations (author's emphasis).

In this light, a key point for consideration is how much influence religious actors can have on politics. It is worth noting here the conclusion drawn by Philpot et al. (2011) in their study of the participation of religious actors in a country's political system:

With the number of "free" and "partly free" countries jumping from 93 in 1975 to 147 in 2005, religious groups and organisations around the world enjoy a greater opportunity to influence the political process by forming lobbies, fielding candidates, organizing political parties, and inviting politicians of all kinds to try to win their support. In countries that combine some modernisation with little or no democratisation, religious and other organisations experience dissonant dynamics: they may enjoy an increased capacity to formulate their own agenda and mobilise resources but little or no opportunity to promote that agenda in the formal political process, a mixture of conditions that is likely to generate violent militancy when combined with an integralist political theology. It is therefore little surprise that parts of the world have experienced some modernisation, little democratisation, and the widespread diffusion of militant political theologies - the Arab Middle East and North Africa, above all - have produced radical religious movements such as Al-Qaeda and Hizbullah (2011: 76).

Thus, conclusions in the literature such as these give weight to the assertion that religious actors are increasingly exercising political power within states and across borders (Toft, Philpott and Shah, 2011: 50). Moreover, it is indicative of how they can often generate violent militancy in their attempt to influence political systems. Indeed, in some cases the evidence shows religion has challenged the political system and driven a shift towards "Godly systems" in which the need for Sharia law resonates. One such example is when Khomeini initiated an Islamic revolution to overthrow the Shah's secular system (Coughlin

2010). Furthermore, as Harik (2004) reminds us, religious actors such as Hizbullah have exerted great influence on the Lebanese political system through the use of “Godly” doctrines. She argues, Hizbullah’s bottom-up “Islamisation” process is an indication of the Party’s objectives to present an alternative system to the Lebanese government.

4.2.1 Hizbullah and the Islamisation process

Educational and cultural institutions play a key role in Hizbullah’s efforts to coordinate the Islamisation process in Lebanon (Deeb 2006). In turn, as discussed by various authors such as Deeb (2006), Harik (2004), and others, the Islamisation process has played a key role in Hizbullah’s efforts to control the Shi’ite community in Lebanon – an outcome which is explored in the following chapter. An example of the Islamisation process is the *Al-Shahid* – martyr’s foundation & *Al-Jarih* – foundation for wounded fighters. Even though its aim is to provide financial assistance to families of the martyred and the wounded, it nevertheless also aims to spread the “culture of martyrdom” (Avon and Katchadourian 2012: 60). *Al-Mahdi* scouts stand as another example of an alternative Islamisation process put in place by Hizbullah, whereby scouts are taught about martyrdom and *Welayet al-Faqih* (Coombes 2009). In this context, it is important to underline how Hizbullah – as an active participant in the Lebanese political system – uses religious tools to allow religious leaders such as Nasrallah to make state-level political decisions.

This tells us something about the difference between Muslim societies in the Middle East and Europe, where the principle of separation of church and state has long been established. The principles of non-interference and sovereignty found their way into Western thinking after the peace of Westphalia 1648. (Griffiths 2003: 29) This approach reflects the European model and dominated the relationship between religion and politics until the 1960s when religious actors began to challenge the European model of governance in the Middle East (Philpot et al. 2011: 58). These challenges were activated due to a number of

factors including the failure to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, American foreign policy towards the region, and the Iranian Revolution (Roy 1994).

In turn, it is important to further explore the nature of the relationship between Hizbullah politics (a religious actor) and the Party's use of religious tools such as *fatwa* and *taklif shari* to achieve political outcomes. For instance, one might ask; What is a *fatwa* and can a religious leader such as Nasrallah in Lebanon, Sistani in Iraq, or Khomeini in Iran issue a "political *fatwa*"? Moreover, how does use of the *fatwa* differ to the use of *taklif shari*? To better understand how the fusion between religious tenets and politics in Islam can manifest, an exploration of the *fatwa* in Islam is provided below. The objective of the exploration is to further demonstrate how *fatwa* have been issued by religious figures in political contexts and the ways in which the progressive dimension of *fatwas* is used for political gain.

4.3 *Fatwa* Origins, Definitions, and Requirements

The term *fatwa* is derived from a verse in the Qur'an and means "asking for a definitive answer" or "giving a definitive answer" (*Surat An-Nisā'* [The Women] verse 4:127, 176). As such, it is an Islamic legal decree issued by an expert in religious law (*Mufti*), relating to a specific question. The *fatwa* is usually undertaken at the request of an individual or judge seeking to resolve an issue where Islamic jurisprudence is uncertain. A *fatwa* may cover a wide scope of matters that include philosophy, social issues, theology and legal theory (Roy 1994), and can be broad enough to respond to questions related to economics, politics, science, and technology. Notably, it remains the case that a *fatwa* lacks compulsion; that is, even though a *fatwa* can be applicable to a person's concerns, it is up to the individual to accept it or not (Roy 1994).

Importantly, a *fatwa* combines the opinion (and judgement) of the *mufti* with *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) knowledge. Therefore, rigorous training in *Fiqh* is required prior to issuing a *fatwa* to ensure it is not based only on the *mufti's* ideas

and thoughts. That is, it should be rendered in accordance with fixed guidance from sources of Islamic law (i.e. the Qur'an and the *Hadith*).³⁵ For a *Mufti* to issue a *fatwa* he should meet the standards of *ijtihad* – the process of differentiating between different scholars' opinions and positions on a subject and judging it in accordance to the strengths or weaknesses of the evidence provided. *Ijtihad* is translated to contextual legal interpretation or reasoning. As Imam Shafi'i, founder of one of the four Sunni Schools of thought explained (cited in Al-Tabtaba'i 2010: 11-31):

It is not allowed for anyone to give a Shari'a explanation (*fatwa*), except one who knows the Holy Qur'an completely including what verses are abrogated and by which verses they were abrogated, and which verses resemble each other in the Qur'an and whether a chapter was revealed in Makkah or Madina. He must know the entire corpus of the Hadith of the Prophet(s), both those which are authentic and those which are false. He must know the Arabic language of the time of the Prophet(s) with its grammar and eloquence as well as know the poetry of the Arabs. Additionally, he must know the culture as the various peoples who live in each different part of the community. If a person has all such attributes combined in [him], he may speak on what is permitted (halal) and what is forbidden (haram). Otherwise he has no right to issue a *fatwa*.

The characteristics of a *mufti* identified above by Imam Shafi are not exhaustive. Furthermore, for a scholar to be qualified to issue a *fatwa*, he is required to:

- know the verses of Qur'an pertaining to the ruling at hand;
- know the reason behind the verses of the Qur'an related to the ruling – when each was revealed and why;
- distinguish between the supportive and oppositional verses of the Qur'an;
- know all the hadith pertaining to the ruling and the soundness of their chain of transmission;
- be familiar with the legal precedents of the issue before him, including the arguments or consensus reached by earlier scholars; and
- be well-versed in the syntax, grammar, pronunciation, idioms, special linguistic uses, customs and culture prevalent at the time of the Prophet (s) and the succeeding two generations (Al-Tabtaba'i 2010: 11-31).

Indeed, the *mufti* is perceived as person of authority since:

The ideological authority of the *fatwā* is invariably explained by saying

³⁵ Hadith are references to Prophet Mohammed's life and statements. These collections have then been used by Muslim scholars as references to Sharia.

that a *muftī* is the deputy and successor to the Prophet, the lawgiver. Legally, the authority of the *muftī* is derived from the doctrine of *taqlīd* (adherence to tradition), which demands consulting the learned, often those of a particular school of law, and following their opinions. Since a *muftī* has to cite authorities for his opinion, his authority is *moral* and *institutional*, not personal. For this reason, the qualifications of a *muftī* and the rules for issuing a *fatwā* have been developed in considerable detail. A *mustaftī* (inquirer) should accept and obey the opinion of the *muftī* when he is satisfied that he is competent and that his opinion is based on earlier authorities. Theoretically, a *muftī* must be a *mujtahid* (an interpreter of law qualified to exercise legal reasoning independently of schools of law), yet a *muqallid* (an adherent to a school) is also allowed to issue a *fatwā*, as long as he mentions the source of his citation (my emphasis) (Al-Tabtaba'i 2010: 11-31).

Hence, there are many conditions and requirements associated with the title of *mufti* in the context of issuing a *fatwa* which have clear implications for our understanding of Islamic authority in the Middle East. The following sections explore how religious tools such as *fatwas* are linked to politics in the Middle East and the role they play in the attempts by leaders or those in authority to direct the thoughts and actions of individuals in the region.

4.3.1 *Fatwas* and politics in the Middle East

Because there are different schools of thought in Islam between the Sunni and Shi'ite sects, there is arguably a lack of central authority. In turn, this provides a socio-political environment in which *fatwas* can be instrumental in the justifications given for intervention and participation in the political process. One notable example is when the prominent Iraqi Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, issued a *fatwa* in June, 2003, against L. Paul Bremer's³⁶ draft Iraqi post-invasion constitution. The draft was to be adopted through an unelected council chosen primarily by the US (Philpot et al. 2011: 93-98). Sistani rejected the council, claiming that it should seek to "create a constitution conforming with the greater interests of the Iraqi people and expressing the national identity, whose basis is Islam" (Sistani; cited in Philpot et al. 2011: 97). Sistani then (indirectly) asked for

³⁶ An American diplomat, best known for the Coalition Provisional Authority following the 2003 invasion of Iraq.
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immediate popular elections and urged women to vote, comparing their role to that of Zaynab, the sister of Imam Hussein (Philpot et al. 2011: 93-98). Sistani exercised both religious and political authority when he urged his followers to vote in the March 2005 national elections and thus presents as an important example of a religious figure who exercises his authority quite deliberately for political gains. Indeed, Sistani was at the time identified as “Iraq’s most consistent and effective advocate of elections and parliamentary representations” (Chandraskaran 2005: 37).

Furthermore, in 1907 the *Ulama* of Marrakech issued a *fatwa* ousting the Sultan of Morocco for his inability to defend the state against French aggression. In 1933, a *fatwa* by the Iraqi *Ulama* called for a boycott on Zionist products as a sign of resistance. Also in Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini used *fatwas* to introduce and legitimise institutions such as the Council for the Islamic Revolution and the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini also issued a *fatwa* in 1989 calling for a death sentence for the author of *The Satanic Verses*, Salman Rushdie. Likewise, Sheikh Qardawi issued a *fatwa* in April, 2004, to boycott American and Israeli products as retribution for not supporting the Palestinian cause. Thus, these examples show the breadth of power that a religious cleric in Islam can wield as both a political figure and a decision maker.

Some *fatwas* have been significant beyond the specific issue, attracting both popular and elite support; whereas others have been largely ignored, apart from local relevance. For example, Pakistan’s Islamist group, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), declared a *fatwa* in January, 2007, to endorse the government’s decision to vaccinate all children against polio in the country’s Northwest province (*Foreign Policy* 2007). However, health workers discovered that parents of 24,000 children refused the vaccination for their child. This resistance emerged due to the local influence of anti-state clerics who claimed that the vaccination was a “Western plot to sterilise Muslims” (*Foreign Policy* 2007). Thus, issuing a *fatwa* is not restricted to religious cases only; rather, it may also address a social issue. Interestingly, *fatwas* can now be obtained online by “Cybermuftis”.

Websites such as www.islamonline.net and www.fatwa-online.com are amongst many on line websites which offer instant *fatwas* (Masud et al. 2017).

The following section explores the theoretical (Islamic) grounds on which *fatwa* and *ijtihad* can be used in politics. As such, it sets the framework for a discussion in Chapter Four of the circumstances and ways in which Hizbullah uses *ijtihad*, *taklif shari*, etc. as religious tools to serve its political agenda.

4.4 *Fatwa, Taklif shari and Ijtihad*

4.4.1 The relationship between Hizbullah and the Faqih

Hizbullah has followed Khamenei as the Party's *Marja* (source of emulation), and since 1994 he has issued *fatwas* for the Party. Unlike Sunni Islam, the Shi'ite sect follows the notion of *marja'eyah*, in which an individual/group chooses a certain *Marja* (source) and follows his interpretation of the Qur'an (Kalantari 2012: 1-13). This provides the individual with the capacity to choose from a variety of options and also ensures the sect's major element of *ijtihad*. There is a wide debate about the complexities and practicality of the *marja'eyah* system, however it exceeds the focus of this research and will therefore not be covered.

The point of interest for this research is the way in which the relationship between Hizbullah and the *Faqih* allows for a broad scope for independent decision-making.³⁷ As asserted by Saad-Ghorayeb (2012: par. 14); "this wide scope of jurisdiction was not only evident under the *wilayat* of Ayatollah Khomeini, who was apotheosized by the party as a *Mujaddid al-Din* (Renewer of Religion), but also under Ayatollah Khamenei who did not officially earn the title of *marjaa al-taqlid* (religious source of emulation) until 1994, shortly after which Hizbullah subscribed to his religious authority".³⁸

³⁷ In order for a scholar to become a source of emulation (or *Marja taklid*), he has to acquire *Fiqh* knowledge and should therefore be a *Faqih*. While the *Faqih* can be a source of emulation, however, a source of emulation cannot necessarily be a *Wali al-Faqih*. *Wali al-Faqih* denotes the highest ruling rank in Shi'ite Islam.

³⁸ In order to gain the title of *Marja*, one needs to have followers.
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However, the nature of the allegiance that Hizbullah has with Iran and to the *wali* remains hard to define (Azani 2011). Certainly, the Party's intervention in the Syrian war has indicated its need to safeguard Iran's interest in the region (Levitt 2013). Moreover, when Hizbullah was faced with the question of whether to participate in the parliamentary elections in 1992, it was Khamenei's advice that resolved the matter, explaining that the initiative would be in accordance with the Party's strategic objectives (Avon and Katchadourian 2012).

Hence, there is a greater level of involvement by *Faqih* in the Party's internal and external matters than might appear on the surface. For example, Khamenei issued a *fatwa* in 2001 which effectively meant that Nasrallah was to be re-elected as the Party's leader permanently, which was against Party's rules³⁹ (Al-Agha 2011; Avon and Katchadourian 2012). Khamenei also issued a *fatwa* for the continuation of Hizbullah's resistance operations against Israel after May, 2000 (Norton 2009: 90). Thus, Khamenei used his role as a *Wali* and a source of emulation to serve a political outcome by ensuring the re-appointment of Nasrallah as leader of the Party. Moreover, Khamenei arguably added to Nasrallah's and Sheikh Mohammad Yazbek's (Head of Hizbullah's Juristic Council) power in Lebanon by appointing them as his religious representatives to endorse the *wali's* religious power in Lebanon (Saad-Ghorayeb 2012).

At the leadership level, the intertwined relationship between religion and politics is evidenced by the actions of Nasrallah for Hizbullah and Khomeini/Khamenei in Iran, where the leaders exercise religious and political authority. Nasrallah uses his position as leader to issue religious commands and to give religious sermons (such as the 10-day Ashoura commemoration). He has also made political decisions such as the call in 2008 for Hizbullah ministers to withdraw from the Cabinet headed by the then Lebanese Prime Minister, Fouad Siniora, following an objection to the establishment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon

³⁹ Nasrallah was elected as a Party leader first in 1992 after the assassination of *Sayyid* Abbas Moussawi, the Party's Secretary General then, through consultative council (Shura council) vote.

(Avon and Katchadourian 2012). Moreover, Nasrallah, uses his image as a religious leader and a *Sayyid* (i.e., a descendant of the Prophet) to ensure his judgments remain unchallengeable (Khatib 2014) (The role of Nasrallah's image in the Party's success is highlighted in the following chapters).

4.4.2 Nasrallah, *fatwa* and *taklif shari*

As Khamenei's religious legal representative in Lebanon (along with Yazbek), Nasrallah holds the exclusive right to issue a *taklif shari* – endorsed by Khomeini as a religious pronouncement. Indeed, this thesis argues that a *taklif shari* issued by Nasrallah heightens his authority and renders his commands more powerful than a *fatwa* because of its compulsory nature.

Furthermore, although the *fatwa* offers solutions/answers to civil matters, *taklif shari* can be used in combat (linking it to military *jihad*) (Hamzeh 2004). As Hamzeh (2004) explains, Khomeini initiated this practice by issuing Iranian men (or in some cases Iranian boys) a *taklif shari* to walk through the landmines during the Iran-Iraq war. In this context, the *taklif shari* becomes a paramilitary tool employed by religious figures.

Therefore, with the continued endorsement of Khamenei, Nasrallah has the capacity to exercise his authority to issue a *taklif shari* rather than having to resort to issuing a *fatwa*. Moreover, as previously noted, compliance with a *fatwa* is voluntary; whereas a *taklif shari* is non-negotiable. Hence, it is reasonable to suggest that it will sometimes be in Nasrallah's and the Party's interests to utilise *taklif shari* as a paramilitary tool for the mobilisation of supporters and for engaging in conflict more broadly and leave *fatwas* for civil, social and economic matters. In turn, the opportunity to use these religious tools to achieve political, social and/or military outcomes is important to our understanding of how Hizbullah uses religion to undertake a pragmatic approach to building up its power base in Lebanon.

For instance, notwithstanding the greater benefits to the Party from issuing *taklif shari*, Nasrallah has in fact issued *fatwas* on occasions to resolve socio-political issues. For example, when a political dispute led to clashes between Sunni and Shi'ite students at a Lebanese university in 2008, Nasrallah gave a televised speech to "issue a *fatwa* calling for calm" (Avon and Katchadourian 2012: 88). Nasrallah also issued a *fatwa* to stop "celebratory" shootings that traditionally followed his (or any other political leader's) speech. Incidents of people being hit by stray bullets led Nasrallah to ask his followers to refrain from using real ammunition. In a speech in 2013, Nasrallah called for celebratory shooting to be 'forbidden', stating:

Well nowadays on holidays people open fire; in political occasions, they open fire; in funerals of martyrs, they open fire [...] Whenever any of the politicians – including me – show up, people start firing in the air. I am not talking about anyone else. I am talking, above all, about myself. [...] today I will say more following discussions we made with religious scholars. Though the idea is clear, we were obliged to send written requests to several major religious authorities whether in Iran or in Iraq. [...] Thus, we resorted to our religion and asked our scholars, authorities and jurists. That's because talking rationally did not lead anywhere, talking legally did not yield any result, and talking morally did not work too [...] this issue is forbidden. Whoever is careful for his religion and his Hereafter must be aware. Moreover, this is more forbidden when the arms are ours and the bullets are ours. Hizbullah does not allow that its arms and bullets are used as such.⁴⁰

This extract exemplifies well how Nasrallah's position as leader of Hizbullah combines both religion and politics and thus has pragmatic undertones. To clarify, it can be argued that Hizbullah's calls to Shi'ites to refrain from firing live ammunition into the air as a traditional form of celebration, and the clash between Shi'ite and Sunni students, are both issues that have the potential to undermine Hizbullah's powerbase. When confronted with such political and social issues in need of resolution, Nasrallah has demonstrated his willingness to resort to Islam ("to our religion") by way of the *fatwa* to connect the present-day

⁴⁰ Islamic Resistance – Lebanon (n.d.) Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, available at: <http://www.moqawama.org/essaydetails.php?eid=28330&cid=142> (accessed 2 February 2014). *Fatwa* and Politics

socio-political issues to Islamic tenets to achieve a pragmatic resolution; namely, one that protects the Party's support base.

In terms of *taklif shari*, Nasrallah has also issued these on different occasions to support a pragmatic approach to addressing social, political, or military issues that threaten or promote Hizbullah's domestic or regional presence. For example, during the 1992 parliamentary elections he issued *taklif shari* for all Shi'ites to participate and vote (Hamzeh 2004); an action which reflects the same principles as Al-Sistani's request for women to vote in Iraq as discussed above. This is arguably a pragmatic decision given, as Hamzeh (2004) explains, that votes were essential for the Party to safeguard its position in the Lebanese parliament. In addition, during the 2006 war with Israel, Nasrallah commanded all reserve members of Hizbullah to join the battle. Similarly, Nasrallah used *taklif shari* to call on members to fight in Syria (Smyth 2015) and thus made pragmatic use of the religious tool to strengthen Hizbullah's action taking power in the region (i.e. Syria) and, in turn, its political interests in Lebanon. It is worth noting however that Nasrallah's extensive use of *taklif shari* has led to criticism from prominent Shi'ite clerics such as Fadlallah, the Party's source of emulation before Khamenei. Fadlallah argued that *taklif shari* should be respected and should not be employed for political gains (Sankari 2005; Al-Agha 2013).

In addition, the application of *taklif shari* as a religious paramilitary command and to maintain a policy of deterrence with Israel in response to its "reveal and disguise strategy" (or psychological war) is closely linked to the group's historical survival notion of *taqiyya*—dissimulation.⁴¹ Indeed, these elements represent the controversy surrounding religion/religious actors playing an influential role in national politics whereby they become increasingly capable of exerting political power within states and across borders (Philpot et al. 2011: 50).

⁴¹ *Taqiyya* is "concealing one's religion or faith due to fear, but in one's heart, the person must believe in the religion s/he is concealing" (Awdeh 2013: 39). The notion of *taqiyya* is derived from the Qur'anic verse (Surat Al- Imran 3:28) that states, "except by way of precaution, that ye may Guard yourselves from them and this is *Taqiyya*" (Awdeh 2013: 40). According to Qur'anic text, Shi'ites are therefore able to "bend the rules" or hide the truth to protect themselves.

Therefore, there is evidence to show that Hizbullah's strategic objective has transitioned from political quietism (dissimulation) to political hegemony (Deeb 2013) as evidenced by years of effort to mobilise the Shi'ite community, the implementation of networks of social services, and the use of religious tools justify and support political, social, or military action

Thus, the use of these religious tools has helped Hizbullah to pursue its political agenda. Foremost, by issuing *fatwas* at particular times and *taklif shari* at other times, Hizbullah appears to be fortified with religious authority (Alagha 2011: 51-55). Moreover, the use of religious tools to protect Lebanese sovereignty combined with the major support it provided to Lebanon's Shi'ite community through the provision of social services has helped to legitimise the Party's objectives (Alagha 2011: 21).

4.4.3 *Ijtihad*: political pragmatism

The third element in Hizbullah's political identity that finds roots in religious notion is *ijtihad*. *Ijtihad*, or judgment derived from contextual interpretation, is yet another area where the Shi'ite sect faces criticism. To clarify, Shi'ites believe that the act of *ijtihad* is something to be proud of (Awdeh 2013); whereas, for Sunni Muslims it is something that is no longer practiced. Therefore, the notion of *ijtihad* is limited to the Shi'ite sect where its importance lies in its ability to ensure their security and survival. Notably, *ijtihad* can play a role in economic matters (e.g. bank interest), social matters (e.g. funerals, inheritance and marriage), and politics (e.g. activism and resistance) (Al-Tabtaba'i 2010) and as such there are specific requirements and guidelines to follow if one is to practice *ijtihad*.

Sharia is derived from the Holy Scriptures in the Qur'an and the hadith and *fatwas* that achieve authority through consensus. In turn, *fatwa* is the product of the *ijtihad* process and takes shape after a series of discussions that involve an *ijtihad* (interpretations) practice. So, in other words, *ijtihad* is the continuation of the process of *fatwa* and (in some cases) challenges pre-determined *fatwas*.

Importantly, the authority afforded religious figures to interpret *hadith* based on personal judgment has important implications for our understanding of Hizbullah's application of *ijtihad* in its use of religious tools. As cases vary in context, circumstances, and reasons, *ijtihad* reflects the theological continuity and adaptation that Hizbullah represents (Khatib 2015). Hence, Hizbullah's ability to adapt to different circumstances – from being a resistance group to an influential political party and regional actor – is the result of an expression of *ijtihad*. For example, Hizbullah continually reiterates that it will not use weapons against the Lebanese people, yet the Party explained its military response in 2008 as an act of necessity to ensure its security (Khatib 2015). As such, the military response was positioned under the interpretation of events as “necessary” allowing *ijtihad* to be used for political “manoeuvring”.

To cite a specific example, in order to take part in union elections (League of Lebanese University Professors, League of Secondary School Teachers, and the journalist's unions), Hizbullah allied itself with members of the “Lebanese Forces”, a political group closely linked to Israel during the Lebanese Civil War. Although this was deemed by the Party to be disloyal (Avon and Katchadourian 2012: 48), the temporary alliance was also deemed to be necessary to protect the Party's strategic objectives.

When questioned about the politics of such a decision, Hizbullah's response is that *ijtihad* is a religious notion, an accepted norm of divine practice, which carries heavy implications. Moreover, that the Party's policy of interpreting events will always be undertaken as a religious duty (*jihad*, *taklif shari*, necessary measures). This has influenced how international actors perceive the Party, provoking debate as to whether it is a religious party or a political party. In turn, important questions emerge, such as; How can the international community deal with Hizbullah?

Such questions about the confluence of Hizbullah's religious and political agendas affect how the international community perceives the Party and what

policies it should form in response to its actions. However, what is lacking is a comprehensive understanding of the religious influence on the Party's ethics, and how the Party uses religion as a political tool. This lack of understanding helps to create a significant and widening gap in knowledge of Lebanese politics, Lebanese-Israeli relationships, the Arab-Arab relationship, and Arab-Israeli conflicts. Furthermore, Hizbullah's progressive and adaptive uses of *fatwa* and *taklif shari* may also be an indication of the pragmatism it has developed during its political transformation. Arguably, such pragmatism is facilitated through the use of *ijtihad* and the affordances it provides the Party to inform decision making on political and social affairs via independent interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, thus making it difficult to predict its intentions and objectives.

Based on the success of groups like Hizbullah, religious actors may prove to be the defining elements in 21st century politics. Non-state actors such as Hamas and Hizbullah have shifted the balance of power in the Middle East and increased the role of Iran in the region (Philpot et al. 2011: 214). In addition, a 2014 U.S. strategy paper stipulated that "the role of Hizbullah shows how a non-state actor can have an important role to work within the regional balance of power equation" (Nerguizian 2014: 19). Hizbullah often employs the instruments of religion and this enhances the symbolic influence of the Party over the Lebanese state. The realisation that religion matters in global politics is thus only now being slowly recognised by policy makers both within the region and without.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored the notion that religion is instrumental to the ability of religious actors in the Middle East to achieve political gains. Using Hizbullah as the primary example, the way in which non-state religious actors in the region fuse the principles of Islam with politics to enhance their political participation and influence were highlighted. Specific focus was placed on the extent to which *fatwa* is used for political gain, along with the use of other religious principles such as *taklif shari*, *taqiyya*, and *ijtihad*. The main argument developed throughout this chapter was that Hizbullah appears to rely on the use of *taklif shari* to

heighten the authority of its leader, Nasrallah, and to enhance its capacity to mobilise Shi'ites and have a presence in regional fighting. Moreover, this chapter explored how the Party's interpretation of Islamic principles has supported its transition towards a stronger presence in Lebanese domestic politics via pragmatic decision making and action taking. Hence, religious actors in the Middle East are no longer seen as non-political and non-influential. On the contrary, they acknowledge the power they hold and are clearly prepared to use it when necessary. Thus, there is a need to better understand both religious roles and religious actors such as Hizbullah in order to find common ground for negotiation in Middle East politics specifically and global politics in general. The next chapter identifies the religious tools utilised by Hizbullah to address social and political "cases" in Lebanon and the region, with particular focus on how their use has facilitated the Party's turn to political pragmatism. The relationship between the religious tools and pragmatic action taking is examined in relation to the Party's use of *ijtihad*, with a discussion of the parallels between Islamic *ijtihad* and Christian casuistry also provided.

5 Hizbullah's Political Pragmatism Through *Ijtihad*

“But when the chosen people grew more strong,
the rightful cause at length became the wrong”

(Absalom and Achitophel, John Dryden)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter develops the argument that Hizbullah's success as a politico-resistance movement has largely been the result of political pragmatism. In turn, Hizbullah's turn to political moderation (pragmatism) can be explained by its use of *ijtihad* when issuing *taklif shari*⁴² and through the practice of *Taqiyyah*. The central argument is developed through an in-depth discussion of Hizbullah's hybrid political-religious identity and it uses of religious tools such as *ijtihad* to embed its position in the Lebanese political system and to maintain a credible reputation as a national resistance movement. The objective of this discussion is to focus on the religious element in Hizbullah's pragmatism. Thus, this chapter begins with an overview of Hizbullah's emergence as a political actor in Lebanon including the hybrid (religious / political) nature of the Party's identity and how this has facilitated pragmatic action making. The focus of the chapter then shifts to an exploration of how Hizbullah's political pragmatism resides in its use of *taklif shari* and *ijtihad*. Included in this exploration is a discussion of the relationship between *ijtihad* and the decision-making/action taking by Hizbullah to serve its political agenda. In addition, *ijtihad* as a pathway for decision making is briefly explored through the lens of casuistry to draw parallels between the nature of their religious-based interpretative dynamics. The main argument developed throughout this chapter is that political pragmatism can plausibly be applied by Hizbullah when the centrality of certain doctrinal principles is repeatedly stressed. It should be noted that the examination of Hizbullah's political pragmatism in this chapter is not undertaken within the parameters of

⁴² *Taklif shari* is an order made under religious pretext – see Chapter three.
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IR theory. As discussed in Chapter Two, Hizbullah's religious identity – a key element of its political pragmatism – is not easily explained via Western-centric IR theories. As such, this research aims to explain Hizbullah's religious identity through its use of pragmatic tools embodied in Shi'ite theology-analogy.

5.2 The Evolution of Hizbullah's Political Pragmatism

The decision by Hizbullah to pursue a strong position within the Lebanese political system (which was considered corrupt) represented the first indication of pragmatism in the Party's political career. After signing the Tai'f Accord⁴³, Hizbullah realised that its position in Lebanon would be compromised as one of the key principles in the Accord was the disarmament of all militias. Hizbullah decided that to remain armed it needed to gain legitimacy as a national resistance movement, even if that meant being part of a corrupt system. This is not to shy away from the fact that Hizbullah was willing to do what any other non-state actor would do to ensure continuity. However, this thesis also argues that while the Party was still at the beginning/early stages of its political career it made politically pragmatic decisions endorsed by its religious identity which reduced the challenges to its legitimacy (see Chapter Two).

Integral to the pragmatic politics demonstrated by Hizbullah is the Party's hybrid political-religious identity (Ghorayeb 2002: 70-75). A demonstration of Hizbullah's emergent pragmatic politics is evident in the Party's response to increased domestic pressure for it to disarm. In 2006 Nasrallah responded to these demands with the statement, "When we build a strong, able and just state that protects Lebanon and the Lebanese, we will easily find an honourable solution to the issue of the resistance"⁴⁴. The political pragmatism of Nasrallah's statement is evident when one considers the crucial role that weaponry plays in both the Party's existence as a resistance movement and its agenda to bring about political change in Lebanon (Gaub 2013: 7). By suggesting that there is an

⁴³ The Tai'f Accord is an agreement reached in 1989 to provide an end to the Lebanese civil war and return to political normalcy.

⁴⁴ Radio Islam (2006). English Translation of the Speech Delivered by *Sayyid* Hassan Nasrallah at the Divine Victory Rally on 22nd September 2006, available at: https://radioislam.org/lebanon/resistance/22_september_2006_speech.htm (accessed 2 February 2014). Hizbullah's Political Pragmatism Through *Ijtihad*

inextricable connection between Hizbullah's military strength and the strength of the Lebanese state, Nasrallah is attempting to legitimise the Party's use of violence and to remind the reader of the historical persecution that the Shi'ites faced (See Chapter One, Two, and Three of this thesis). As such, there is an attempt to take action (to protect its arms) that will present little disruption to the status quo and the pursuit of its political agenda.

The argument offered by Nasrallah reflects a position sometimes supported in Islam that the consequences of action, rather than the action itself, should often be given primary consideration when determining the morality of the course of action (Leaman 2016: 39). By referring to the ultimate goal of an "honourable solution", Nasrallah is applying the "principle of *darura* or necessity" to the Party's need for arms and its resort to violence in resistance. That is, he is arguing that the circumstances in Lebanon demand that Hizbullah has arms to engage in certain actions which otherwise may not be acceptable, but which are nonetheless morally justifiable (Karmer 1990; Leaman 2016). In turn, it also implies the evolution of *Taqiyyah* as a result. As mentioned previously, Hizbullah's protection of arms stems from its insecurities and a lack of trust towards the weak and corrupt Lebanese state. This mirrors the Shi'ite endorsement of *taqiyya* – a religious endorsement, as a mean of protection and survival. However, *Taqiyyah* is not the only religious element that can be identified in Hizbullah's political platform.

In fact, when looking at the hierarchical structure of Hizbullah, one can trace the influence of the group's religious identity on its political activities and strategy. For instance, the organisation's decision-making is made through a *Shura* Council comprised of six members and the *Shura al-Qarar* comprised of nine members, all of whom are clerics (Hamzeh 2004). Accordingly, the role of religion in Hizbullah's political actions is evident, and the uniqueness of Hizbullah and its success is intimately connected to its religious identity. In turn, of particular importance is the way in which the Party's religiosity underpins its political pragmatism.

To develop an understanding of this relationship, it is important to examine the Party's hierarchical structure. The members of both councils are first and foremost religious figures and they therefore are primarily guided in their decision-making by religious scriptures rather than political doctrines or norms of international law (Hamzeh 2004). However, the councils operate within a centralised hierarchical structure that exercises control over "social, political, and military institutions to consolidate popular support, political capital, and military capability" (Jackson 2009: 2). Moreover, decision-making related to these different "dimensions" of the Party increasingly takes place within the context of Hizbullah's transition from domestic fringe actor to quasi-legitimate national and regional actor with a recognised political presence and growing national support. Hence, there is pressure on decision-makers to maintain and grow Hizbullah's diverse support base while considering how greater moderation in their decision-making and political activities may benefit their inclusion in legitimate political discourse (Jackson 2009). The challenge for clerics is thus to negotiate, bargain, and make decisions that accommodate both the Party's absolute position on conflict and the pragmatism required to access resources to ensure their political survival.

5.3 *Ijtihad* and Political *Fatwas*

The central premise in the argument developed in this thesis is that Hizbullah's pragmatism is made possible through *ijtihad*⁴⁵ (Cook 2000: 103-110). The leading Shi'ite school of thought on *ijtihad* is the *Jaafari* School. It was headed by Imam Jaafar Ibn Muhammad Al-Sadiq, whose work, *Al-fiqh al-Jaafari*, addressed topics such as *hadith*, Islamic ethos, ethology and the *Quran* (Cook 2000: 103-110). The *Jaafari* School does not differ significantly from the four Sunni schools⁴⁶, however there are notable methodological differences. For Shi'ites, there exists a belief that God will not leave human-kind without guidance. This is why God sent prophets and why there are *Imams* (religious scholars) responsible for the interpretation of

⁴⁵ *Ijtihad*, which means diligence, is a system of textual interpretations commonly used in Islam.

⁴⁶ The four Sunni schools are: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali

the *Quran* and *hadith* to give guidance after the prophets died (Cummiskey 2011: 76-80). With the passing of the 11th *Imam* in Shi'ite Islam however (there were 12 recognised *Imams* in total), Ayatollahs emerged to play a significant role in *Shari'a* interpretation. This notion is based on treating *hadith* as divine authority.

In Islam, the *Quran* is considered to be the direct word of God, with the Prophet Mohammed as his Messenger. Moreover, it is the theological basis of the authority of the *hadith*, which are non-*Quranic* sayings of the Prophet Mohammed and the example of his life as a model (*Sunna*). As such, the *Quran* and *hadith* represent the cornerstones of the Islamic way of life and Islamic law or *Shari'a*. Also, while the Islamic way of life is centred upon the fulfilment of the five pillars of Islam,⁴⁷ there remains a certain degree of flexibility in how (or if) each pillar is to be fulfilled. For example, breaking the fast in the holy month of *Ramadan* is permitted for health reasons. The *Hajj* "pilgrimage" is also to be made only if the person is capable both financially and physically.

Importantly, these simple examples of "exception" that exist within the doctrine of Islam indicate a flexibility in practice that can be translated into *Shari'a* pragmatism. In their simplest interpretation, they demonstrate the potential difficulties the faithful may experience in their daily lives in applying *Shari'a* norms. In turn, the faithful rely on *mufti* (particularly rationalist *mufti*) to guide interpretation of the *Quran* and *Hadith* and to offer advice (*fatwa*) on what behaviours conform suitably to *Shari'a* (Jonsen 2005). Crucially, *fatwa* can also address political situations (in addition to personal issues) with the aim to balance "exceptional" circumstances with "rational efforts to interpret and reconcile opinions" to guide governance practices and individual behaviours (Jonsen 2005: 58). Therefore, after the Prophet Mohammed's death, there was great need for *ijtihad*. This guidance was based on a complete trust in religious scholars.⁴⁸ Shi'ite theologians focussed on important aspects of *ijtihad* and

⁴⁷The five pillars of Islam are: declaration of faith in God and his messenger Mohammed, prayer, charity or *zakat*, fasting during the holy month of *Ramadan*, and pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hadith* in *Sahih Al Bokhari* 1:2:48).

⁴⁸The four major schools of Sunni Islamic theology are: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii, and Hanbali.

considered it as a continuous notion since it addressed matters of the current age rather than referring to unrelated times (Ruthven 1997: 40-71).

At the geopolitical level, it is important to note that Iran is the only country where Shi'ism is the state religion. There, Shi'ite clerics continue to use re-interpretation or *ijtihad* by grand Ayatollahs. The *akhhari* "traditionalists" believed that this right was closed with the disappearance of the twelfth *Imam*; whereas *Usuli* "fundamentalists" believe that this right resided with the high *Ulama* (Roy 1994: 171). Thus, the right to *ijtihad* was then recognised only for high *Ulama*, referred to as *Mujtahid* "interpreter" or Ayatollah.

The clergy's position in politics was evident in Ayatollah's Shirazi's *fatwa* in 1891, which forbade the use of tobacco if it was produced by a British company (Roy 1994: 172). The *fatwa* served a political role again in 1920, when Shi'ite clerics inspired resistance against English troops in southern Iraq by issuing *fatwas* to fight the occupation. The agenda of these clerics was not only religious in nature, but also political, and *fatwas* were used to ensure public support.

As asserted by Roy (1994: 172), the relative "openness" of the Shi'ite clergy "to the non-Islamic corpus" – compared to the more close-mindedness of the Sunni *ulama* – allowed for greater consideration of different schools of thought and cultural factors in their decision making. As such, their consideration of religious traditions did not always rely only on legalistic impulses based on the application of moral law. Rather, the centralised consensus capacity of the clergy could at times combine philosophical understandings with "casuistic legalism" (Roy 1994: 172) which allowed for the case-specific applications of ethical rules to guide individual conduct.

The traditionalist view of *Sharia* is essentially legalistic and casuistic; whereas the reformist fundamentalist position is critical of tradition and popular religious practices, favouring strict application of the founding texts, particularly when presented with an external threat (Roy 1994). This, of course, implies a form of Hizbullah's Political Pragmatism Through *Ijtihad*

tension in the application of *Shari'a* between traditionalists and reformists. The legalistic and casuistic (traditionalist) view of *Sharia* invites the incorporation of broader “philosophical” considerations into interpretations of the *Quran* and *hadith* (Gui 2010: 2). As such, there is greater scope for pragmatic logic – that is more reflective of popular forms of Sufism⁴⁹ – to be applied in decision-making processes and to selected courses of action, including the issuing of *fatwas*. Notably, the utilisation of *fatwa* for political purposes was clearly evident in Iran’s clerical constitution. For example, Khomeini announced the primacy of *Shari'a* over other laws in 1988 (Coughlin 2010: 44-60). Khomeini’s emphasis on religious tools to serve his revolutionary goals is thus evident in this instance.

This thesis argues that the allowance for analogical reasoning and a case-by-case approach in *ijtihad* means it can be used as a religious tool for a pragmatic approach to political decision making. As Rumi (2015: 91-96) explains, *ijtihad* is “the way of change” within Islam. This provides the councils’ clerics with the religious platform from which to engage in their “duty” to exercise independent judgment to formulate new interpretations of Islamic principles to reflect changing times. In turn, given that a salient feature of Shi’ism is the interpretation of *Shari'a* through *ijtihad* by Ayatollahs, the following sections explore the extent to which the acceptance of *ijtihad* by Shi’ites allows for, or underpins, the convergence of religiosity in the decision-making and political pragmatism demonstrated by Hizbullah.

The changing political and social conditions in Lebanon have required Hizbullah to translate its social and military actions into political capital (Rumi 2015); namely to use *ijtihad* as a tool to develop political appeal. For example, Hizbullah’s political participation in the Lebanese parliament in 1992 was negotiated with Iran so that it did not conflict with the Party’s ideology; namely *Welayet el-faqih*. Another example is the staunchly Islamist institutional network operated by Hizbullah (Hamzeh 2004). This allows the Party to operate under an

⁴⁹ Sufism is defined as Islamic mysticism or the inward dimension of Islam. This phenomenon involves a mystical trend characterised by values and ritual practices.
Hizbullah’s Political Pragmatism Through *Ijtihad*

Islamic banner, but also to operate politically to gain more votes and to control/monopolise the Shi'ite community. The Party achieves this primarily by leading, to a certain extent, the process of much-needed social and political change in Lebanon via a bottom-up approach (Saade 2016: 143-145). Having emerged in the context of civil war (and the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon in 1973), Hizbullah uses its Islamist institutional network to not only respond to the punishment of Shi'ites by Israel in response to regional issues (i.e. the activities of Palestinians), but also to directly access and gain support from the Shi'ite communities to address the disproportionately low level of political representation of Muslims in the Lebanese government (Deeb 2006). Hence, in both these examples, the decision-making by Hizbullah clerics demonstrated a religious-based pragmatic approach to taking advantage of political opportunities.

Indeed, notwithstanding its ostensible adherence to Islamic purity, Hizbullah's ability to gain political advantage and popularity in the last 10 years has arguably been most derived from its pragmatic decision making and action taking (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002: 70-75). Clearly, the Party has had to adapt to the constantly changing circumstances in the region but has managed to do so without openly violating its platform as a devout religious movement. After linking the notion of *Taqiyyah* to its decision to take part in the Lebanese political system, Hizbullah utilised another religious instrument to support its success; namely, the common Shi'ite theological notion of *ijtihad*, which is the continuation of *fatwa*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, *ijtihad* is widely used and accepted by Shi'ite clerics; whereas most of the Sunni sects remain rather ambivalent about its use (Ruthven 1997: 40-71) (See below for details.)⁵⁰

5.3.1 Hizbullah's political pragmatism through the use of religious tools

An area of interest to this thesis is the extent to which Hizbullah's use of *ijtihad* when issuing a *fatwa* to deliver politically pragmatic outcomes reflects the

⁵⁰ For Sunnis, Islamic teachings and discourses are to be quoted from the Qur'an and *Hadith* only; rather than resorting to re-interpretation or *Ijtihad*.
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Western-centric (Christian) approach of casuistry. The reason for this interest is to broaden the scope of understanding related to the employment of religious tools in political contexts (or non-religious contexts) by different monolithic religions; namely, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Casuistry has a place in the Arab and Islamic worlds⁵¹, however the exploration of *fatwas* through the lens of Christian casuistry is not undertaken at length as the focus of this chapter is to retain the analysis of Hizbullah's use of religious tools within Islamic parameters. As such, the following section briefly explores the evolution of casuistic methods and the philosophical use of the construct before examining the parallels between Western-centric casuistry and Islamic *fatwa* to locate Hizbullah's use of religious tools within a non-Islamic notion.

5.3.1.1 *Casuistry: An overview*

In general, the literature on casuistry covers issues such as morality (moral law), mental reservations or lying, self-preservation, abuse of casuistry, the role of the casuist, and moral consciousness. Kirk (1999: 109) defined casuistry as "the science of dealing with 'cases' of consciences; and a case, whether in conscience or in law, is a collection of unforeseen circumstances". Casuistry is thus a process of moral reasoning applied to specific cases, as opposed to the general study of ethical theories or concepts (Smith; cited in Kirk 1999: 90-110). As such, casuistry developed as a process of analogies to resolve unforeseen circumstances and emerged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as an element of theological revisions led by Catholic, Protestant and Anglican institutions (Kirk 1999: 90-110).⁵²

⁵¹ A direct translation of the term is *ifta'* or *fatwa* of *damir*: cases of conscience. In other words, casuistry in Arabic equates to issuing *fatwas* about legal/religious or *Shari'a* matters (Al-Mawrid 1986: 158; Elias' Pocket Dictionary; 55; Oxford Dictionary 1972: 194). As illustrated earlier, *fatwa* is a case-specific legal notion practiced by Muslim theologians to issue religiously binding verdicts for possible application amongst all Muslims. An individual has the capacity to choose either to accept (adopt) or dismiss a *fatwa* (and possibly seek another religious opinion). Although in Shi'ism, opinions by the various Ayatollahs tend to be limited to their followers.

⁵² Indeed, casuistry was initially pursued by Roman Catholic priests to locate relevant solutions for certain cases, both novel and common (Leites 1988: 59).

Notwithstanding the criticism of the casuistic process from some eighteenth and nineteenth century philosophers⁵³, casuistry was generally perceived to be valid (Kirk 1999). During the early twentieth century, a reassertion of morality and basic values emerged in Britain and America, particularly in the fields of law, medicine and business (Jonsen and Toulmin 1988: 112-117). In turn, a result of this reassertion was the notion of moral reasoning as a useful method for finding resolutions.

For instance, Jonsen (1991: 14-16) has argued that casuistry is useful for justifying decisions about particular actions in specific contemporary cases, because it is not restricted – like ethical theories such as Kantianism and utilitarianism – to comprehensively account for all ethical perspectives. In addition, Strong (1999: 398) argues (in relation to bio-medicine) the benefits of the inductive rather than deductive approach to decision making endorsed in casuistry. According to the author, this allows decision makers to develop arguments based on comparisons of morally relevant factors with other contemporary paradigm cases – rather than general ethical principles – to identify reasonable and contextually relevant courses of action to take.

Furthermore, some scholars have referred to the notion of new or modern casuistry, with a new understanding of casuistic explanations in politics. The new understanding pertains to the central role that social institutions can play in providing “reliable moral knowledge and the stability of norms and expectations” in the practical application of morality (Cherry and Iltis 2007: 75). Examples include the norm of humanitarian intervention and “war on terror” (Jonsen and Toulmin 1988).

⁵³ Casuistry was criticised by philosophers including Locke, Butler, Kant, Pascal and Rousseau because of its unorthodox approach to the interpretation and moral examination or reasoning of certain subjects (Kirk 1999). Locke for instance argued that an individual is not capable of interpreting an action or behaviour without going back to, or referring to, a law that is considered unquestionable or natural; that is, God’s law as transformed from natural law into societal law (Locke 1821: 12). Casuistry was also rejected on hermeneutic grounds; different cultures possessed different ways of resolving problems and this posed inherent difficulties for centralised decision-making structures (Keenan 1996: 123).
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Casuistry thus offers a framework of case-specific moral reasoning closely paralleled with *ijtihad* and can thus provide a guide to understanding pragmatism by a group such as Hizbullah, which is firmly grounded in a system of religious belief. In other words, an attempt can be made to use casuistry in order to explain Hizbullah's pragmatism and to explore how religious principles underpin this.

5.4 Hizbullah's pragmatism and the Party's religious framework

The decisions by Hizbullah to participate in the Lebanese parliament in 1992 and the Lebanese government in 2005 had to be confirmed with the grand Ayatollah, in compliance with the Party's religious framework (Hamzeh 2004). Notably, in Sunni Islam, the highly-decentralised notion of Sunna religious consensus means that Sunni adaptation to changing circumstances is a much longer process. In contrast, the hierarchical structure of Shi'ism makes it possible to reach consensus more quickly regarding responses designed to adapt to changing circumstances (Roy 1994: 170-189).

In relation to Hizbullah, as mentioned earlier, the hierarchical structure of the Party reflects a traditional arrangement; namely, a chain of command from top to bottom. The party has two major decision-making bodies: the *Shura* Council and the *Shura al-Qarar* (Hamzeh 2004: 44-79). Matters pertaining to legislative and administrative issues are addressed by the *Shura* Council; whereas matters covering political issues are resolved by the *Shura al-Qarar*. The authority of the two councils is subordinated however to the Secretary-General, *Sayyid* Hassan Nasrallah, who has the distinctive and exclusive capacity for *taklif shari* (Hamzeh 2004: 44-79). Given his role as the head of both legislative bodies, Nasrallah was thus in a position to guide the development of the Party's hard and soft power capabilities to the extent that it could pursue its goals and objectives more independently (Swanson 2008: 26-28). Of critical importance to this outcome was Nasrallah's ability to facilitate the transition of Hizbullah's primary focus away from a staunchly pan-Islamic perspective to a more Lebanon-centric perspective (Malthane 2011: 97-99).

These developments provide evidence of the connections made in this chapter between *ijtihad* and Hizbullah's pragmatism. Nasrallah is acknowledged for his "astute pragmatism" when calculating the manner of the Party's involvement in conflicts and its efforts to overcome political obstacles (Khatib 2015). Moreover, he is recognised for his ability to bring members of the Sunni and Shi'a sects together, and to enjoy some support among Christian and secularist groups (Sawson 2008). Although, as stated by Malthane (2011: 98), "Hizbullah's cardinal reference group was first of all the Shiite community". In turn, the Party's ability to adapt the concept of Islamic *jihad* in response to military, societal and political matters provides it with the ideological flexibility and Party mechanism to build political support through its responses to regional and domestic politics (Khashan and Moussawi 2007: 1).

As a result, Nasrallah's pragmatism and its potential to appeal to diverse groups strengthened his prestige as both a political leader and a religious figure (Hamzeh 2004). It is well documented that the positive impact of Nasrallah's leadership on Hizbullah has been his ability to shape the definition and redefinition of Hizbullah's interests in Lebanon and how they can be achieved successfully (Malthane 2011; Swanson 2008). In turn, this has meant understanding Islamic principles and applying religious tools such as *ijtihad* and *taklif shari* to drive its resistance efforts from a more nationalistic perspective. Moreover, Hizbullah's shift in orientation towards Lebanon "as its frame of reference" (Malthane 2011: 89) has in many ways necessitated that Nasrallah adopt a pragmatic approach to his decision making; that is, a case-based moral interpretation of *Shari'a*, to support the Party's political goals. The following section discusses the way in which Nasrallah directs Hizbullah towards politically pragmatic outcomes in response to political and social issues through the use of *taklif shari*.

5.4.1 Hizbullah's use of *taklif shari*

Taklif shari is a religious command or non-negotiable order often perceived as a holy request (Hamzeh 2004). It is used only in certain "cases"; often in times of war (2006 war) and emergency (2008 clashes). In turn, a number of examples can be cited where Nasrallah has employed the analogical reasoning allowed in *ijtihad* to case-specific events to issue *taklif shari* so that the Party may achieve politically pragmatic outcomes.

For instance, the Lebanese government's decree in May, 2008, to end the independence of Hizbullah's local communication network and to limit the powers of the Chief of Airport Security (a supporter of Hizbullah) was a major challenge to the Party's political agenda. As Khatib (2011: 73) explains, Hizbullah's use of communication technologies is vital to its public relations campaigns and its ability to conduct "visual displays of power" to win political support in the public domain. Nasrallah issued a *taklif shari* to mobilise supporters to protect the *moqawama's* communication network (Zisser 2009: 33) issuing a statement that Hizbullah "will cut the hand off anyone who wants to jeopardise the *moqawama*" (See Chapter Five and Six of this thesis). Hizbullah fighters were subsequently sent onto the streets of Beirut. This action later escalated into open gunfire exchanges between Future Movement, AMAL, and Hizbullah fighters. Moreover, it was feared that the conflict would quickly translate into Sunni-Shi'ite strife (Abboud and Muller 2013: 472) as the Future Movement was a Sunni dominated group, and Amal and Hizbullah were Shi'ite dominated.

An analysis of this response by Hizbullah demonstrates how *ijtihad* was used to (re)interpret the way in which "resistance" should be understood. On the surface, Hizbullah's response to its political opponents demonstrated the Party's un-willingness to compromise its communication network and made evident that it was prepared to use a religious instrument, *taklif shari*, to explain itself. When analysed more deeply, however, by identifying the communications network as a "significant part of the weapons of the resistance", Nasrallah sought

to draw an analogy between the adversarial actions of the Lebanese government and the adversarial actions of Israel.

Arguably, his reasoning was to frame all adversarial action against Hizbullah as action in support of Israel, thus positioning all “those who try to stand in [Hizbullah’s] way as traitors and Israeli collaborators” (Khatib 2011: 70). Nasrallah is able to make his reasoning credible by drawing on Hizbullah’s growing reputation in Lebanon as a resistance group; namely, the primary force of resistance to Israel in the Middle East, rather than a militia. Moreover, he increases the impact of his reasoning on Hizbullah supporters by making statements that frame Hizbullah’s adversaries as traitors.

This reasoning process by Nasrallah is evidence of his astute pragmatism because it provided him with an opportunity to engage Hizbullah supporters to protect the political ground that had been made by the Party through its successes against Israel in Southern Lebanon and its strengthening Shi’ite base. Nasrallah undoubtedly realises the power of *taklif shari* as a non-negotiable paramilitary command to direct Hizbullah followers. By using analogical reasoning to position his political opponents as an “extension of the Israeli threat” (Khatib 2011: 70), and then issuing a *taklif shari* to resist such a threat, Nasrallah shows his ability to use the religious tool in a well-calculated and specific way to consolidate the Party’s political power (Alagha 2006). In this instance, Nasrallah is the casuist in that he draws on specific domestic circumstances to interpret Islamic resistance which he then uses to underscore when and why to issue *taklif shari* (Chapter Six of this thesis highlights the importance of *taklif shari* for Hizbullah to mobilise fighters to aid the Assad regime during the Syrian war).

Even though Hizbullah had the military capabilities to use greater military force in the clashes over the communications network, it chose instead to limit its response. However, it can be argued that Nasrallah’s pragmatic awareness of the link between the people’s perceptions of the Party’s military power and their perceptions of the Party as a credible resistance movement drove his decision

making. As Khatib (2011) points out, the opportunity for Hizbullah to present itself as reluctantly prepared to use force in domestic issues was crucial to building political support in Lebanon as it positioned Hizbullah as a party in the pursuit of justice rather than power.

The use of *taklif shari* by Hizbullah is also evident in Nasrallah's call on the reserve army to assemble in times of war (Hamzeh 2004). As stated by Abu Ali, a Hizbullah fighter in Syria, in an article published in June 2013 on the website "Now Lebanon", titled *Hezbollah fighter details operations in Qusayr*, "everyone who goes to fight in Syria received a *taklif shari*" (Now Lebanon 2013). Hence, the use of *taklif shari* can be regarded as a tactical action by Hizbullah related to a specific case; that is, the essential need for the Party to take part in protecting the Syrian regime (See Chapters Two and Six of this thesis). Nasrallah's reasoning in this instance is based on his understanding that Hizbullah's partnership with Syria is beneficial to both parties (Khatib 2011: 64). Moreover, it involves the use of *ijtihad* to achieve politically pragmatic outcomes in the way that Nasrallah utilises *Welayet el-Faqih* ideology as a political tool. In relative contrast to the Lebanon-centric reasoning by Nasrallah discussed above, the more pan-Islamic perspective demonstrated in Hizbullah's support of Syria demonstrates Nasrallah's political strategy to balance political decisions related to domestic issues in Lebanon with political decisions related to the Islamic world.

Moreover, Hamzeh (2004) reminds us in *In the Path of Hizbullah* that *taklif shari* is derived from the *Welayet el-Faqih* ideology and from the Party's loyalty to the *Faqih*. That is, the *Faqih* is the only political body to issue a *taklif shari*. Hence, if a *fatwa* requires a consensus committee, use of the *taklif shari* is solely restricted to the religious leader. Furthermore, the credibility of the use of *taklif shari* is also reinforced as it is issued by a religious figure and leader as a '*Sayyid*' (this is further discussed in Chapters Five and Six). As the Party leader, Nasrallah will invariably need to blend ideological (religious), social, military, and economic elements in his decision making on domestic and non-domestic 'cases' for strategic purposes to continue to strengthen the Party's political base.

Another example of Nasrallah's *ijtihad* (reasoning) and the way it underpins Hizbullah's political pragmatism includes the decision to form a coalition with the Free Patriotic Movement (a major Christian Maronite group in Lebanon). The main long-term objective of Hizbullah as stated in the Party manifesto (p. 23) is to achieve leadership in Lebanon via change in the political system to a majoritarian democracy. This form of democracy is fundamentally about achieving majority consensus among the Lebanese people to assume leadership power. Yet, with political sectarianism being the main obstacle to reform in the Lebanese political system (Khatib 2011: 62), Nasrallah's pragmatic reasoning suggests the need to build popular national support by shifting the public's perception of the Party as intent on creating an Islamic state to one that can be a leader of all people.

It may therefore be argued that in the pursuit of consensus building, *ijtihad* has been applied by Nasrallah to interpret the way in which non-Muslims are regarded within the Islamist framework of Lebanese society. Nasrallah's interpretation legitimises Christians as collaborators in building Lebanese society – as opposed to *ahl al-dhimma* or as non-Muslims subjected to *Shari'a law* (Khatib 2011: 72). The pragmatism underpinning “consensus rhetoric” to identify Lebanon's Christians as “partners” in the national resistance movement is thus evident in its potential to deliver Hizbullah majority support in Lebanon, without which the Party cannot achieve its vision.

Hizbullah's decisions based on *ijtihad* (reasoning) have not always produced positive results for Lebanon, however. The kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers in 2006 by the Party for instance was the reason used by Israel to wage war on Lebanon. Nasrallah claimed during one interview on *Al-Mayadeen* TV in 2013 that Hizbullah had intelligence that Israel was planning to attack Lebanon that year. In turn, he determined that the best course of action was to do a pre-emptive attack by kidnapping the soldiers and creating an element of surprise for the Israelis. This, he stated, might weaken or decrease the effect of the Israeli attacks

(*Al-Mayadeen* 2013). Therefore, it could be suggested that Nasrallah had acted in accordance with the Islamic principle of “lesser evil” that was explained by Khashan and Moussawi (2007) in order to identify what circumstances calls for defensive or offensive *jihad*.

Subsequently, Hizbullah was widely accused of being responsible for the war and for weakening the Lebanese state. For example, a prominent Lebanese Druze member of parliament, Walid Jumblatt, criticised Hizbullah in his interview with *Le Figaro* on July 13th, 2006. Jumblatt stated, “Hizbullah played a very dangerous game by kidnapping these two soldiers...” Also, the Arab League claimed that Hizbullah’s attacks on Israel were “unexpected, inappropriate, and irresponsible acts” (cited in Middle East Media Research Institute 2006). Nasrallah was criticised for taking such action independently and without consulting the Lebanese government (Zisser 2009: 33-36).

On the other hand, the Party’s decision to pre-empt what had been planned by Israel is further evidence of Nasrallah applying *ijtihad* to frame Hizbullah’s resistance towards those who threaten Islam around the notions of necessity and self-defence (Khatib 2013: 71). The disproportionate nature of the Israeli response however led Nasrallah to state that “had he known the scale of the Israeli attack, he would not have gone into war” (Zisser 2009: 33). In turn, Nasrallah’s admission suggests his awareness of the political limits of his decision making based on a pragmatic approach. Nonetheless, Hizbullah then worked to translate the outcome into a “victorious war” for the Party by demonstrating that it had the capacity to stop any ground attack in southern Lebanon and to hold firm in the face of Israel’s disproportionate aggression (Khatib 2013: 54-68).

5.4.2 Implications of *ijtihad* for Hizbullah’s actions

The above examples provide evidence of the pragmatism that underpins decisions by Hizbullah leadership on how to respond to domestic and regional cases. When considered collectively, it may be asserted that Nasrallah’s objective was to use religious tools such as *ijtihad* and *taklif shari* to position the Party as a

resistance party rather than a militia, and one whose resistance is one of necessity and self-defence. This then allows Hizbullah to move away from public perceptions that the Party's primary goal is to create an Islamic state towards the perception that its goal is to protect and strengthen Lebanon; a perception that is vital to the Party's ability to achieve broader political support.

Hizbullah's political pragmatism and the use of *taklif shari* have won the Party considerable success and relative popularity in Lebanon. Indeed, this chapter has argued that Hizbullah's success can be attributed to the organisation's sustained ability to develop and maintain a coherent and convincing identity based on religious and political pragmatism. These elements in Hizbullah's response to events are thus the cornerstone of the Party's survival or demise. Hizbullah must be constantly aware of the dangers of the abuse of *taklif shari* however for it may lead to the Party's loss of credibility, and place the Party under suspicions again.

5.5 Conclusion

The discussion of the use of religious tools in Middle Eastern politics in this chapter served to highlight the role of religion in Hizbullah's turn to political pragmatism. A key component of the argument developed in this chapter is that the main driver of Hizbullah's political progress in Lebanon is its application of *ijtihad*, analogic reasoning to domestic and regional "cases" to broaden its political support. To substantiate this argument, the discussion in this chapter focused on Nasrallah's reasoning in relation to uses of *taklif shari* as deemed necessary. The role of *ijtihad* in the uses of these religious tools was also explained by exploring the parallels between *ijtihad* and the Christian process of casuistry. The following chapter discusses the speeches made by Nasrallah as Secretary General of the Party with the aim to analyse the contents and significant contextual factors that convey the Party's use of religious discourse in its political strategy.

6 Content and context analyses of Nasrallah's Speeches 2000-2013

“Suddenly there was a new model for dealing with Israel: the Hizbullah model. Don't make concessions. Don't negotiate. Use violence and the Israelis will grow weary” (Ross 2004: 626)



Photo Courtesy of google.com

“If you desire death, life will be granted to thee” (Imam Ali)

“In the name of the blood of the stolen Jerusalem

We have kept dignity, and we will not forget

Khyber and the grand battle of *Badr*

We will remain faithful to the oath, O' Nasrallah!”

(Hizbullah Oath, Khatib 2014: 124)

“We are the protectors of the nation” (Nasrallah 2007)

6.1 Introduction

The power of rhetoric and the speech act, and their effects on audiences have been of great interest to researchers for many decades (Glover 2011). However,

the research focus has largely been on the analysis of successful speeches in Western contexts (Alkhirbash et al. 2014: 41). As such, there has been little attention paid to rhetoric and the speech act in non-Western communities, and the significance of contextual events and audience to speech contents and the techniques employed by the speaker. This chapter examines the rhetorical tools, including the use of context, employed by Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, in his speeches from 2000 to 2013. The aim of the examination is to identify the main religious themes in his speeches and what they reveal in relation to the main research question; namely, the extent to how religion is used to legitimize Hizbullah's pursuit of its political objectives.

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the role played by the personal attributes of Nasrallah in the overall effectiveness of his speeches. This is followed by a brief overview of Hizbullah's media arm and its relation to the creation and management of the Party's image. A content analysis is then performed on Nasrallah's speeches (an explanation of content analysis and its procedures is provided in the Introduction) with the over-arching objective to provide evidence of how he utilises rhetorical devices and context to imbue religious elements into Hizbullah's everyday politics to mobilise and motivate its supporters. Descriptive and quantitative data results are presented and discussed for the 101 speeches Nasrallah delivered during the period under review. The speeches were obtained via the Party's official English website (the author's translation) and from Nicholas Noe's book, *Voices of Hezbollah: The Statement of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah* (2007).

The results of the data content analysis are presented according to 15 key themes: (1a) Hizbullah as a protector of the Shi'a sect (1b) the Hizbullah-Iran relationship, (1c) Hizbullah's support for Palestine, (1d) resistance to Israel; (2) religion-based storytelling; (3) use of humour and irony; (4) religion by topic of discussion; (5) "divine victory"; (6) "victory"; (7) the language of fear and threat; (8) the "oppressed vs. oppressors"; (9) community development; (10) education; (11) the role of women in society; (12) pragmatism based on quietism; (13) Hizbullah as "a party for all Lebanese" vs. as "a party for the Shi'a"; (14) *Welayet al-Faqih* by

event; and (15) *Welayet al-Faqih* by year. These themes emerged from an initial scan of the content, situation and purpose of Nasrallah's speeches selected for study. This was undertaken to develop a general sense of the intent of Nasrallah's speeches and the rhetorical devices he employed to convey his messages. The themes listed above were then identified during this initial scan based on their relevance to the research question.

The argument developed in this chapter is that Nasrallah's use of religious rhetoric in combination with other variables such as Hizbullah's wide institutional network and social services has helped the Party to obtain and maintain its image as a resistance group and to solidify its political status in Lebanon. The popular support of Lebanese Shi'ites particularly as identified as especially important to the achievement of these outcomes. Indeed, the results demonstrate that Hizbullah has constructed a religious-historical narrative of Shi'ism as a "social, cultural and political force" that aims to create and empower an "imagined community" of Shi'ite resistance in Lebanon (Khatib et al. 2014: 52; Nasr 2007).

6.2 Personal attributes of Nasrallah

Nasrallah provides a useful starting point for the analysis of his rhetorical style and the importance he places on safeguarding his image as Party leader. His personal attributes contribute to the success of his speeches because it is important for the audience members to be persuaded of the speaker's credibility and reputation so that they may believe and trust in what he/she says. In Nasrallah's case, this task is made easier based on his religious credentials (as *Sayyid*) which accord him a credible and divine image (Nasr 2007; Hamzeh 2004).

Moreover, Nasrallah's reputation as a person who says what needs to be said was enhanced following the speech he delivered after the death/martyrdom of his eldest son, Hady, in the battle against the Israelis on 12 September, 1997 (Matar cited in Khatib et al. 2014: 160). Nasrallah's dignified reaction came across as a heroic stand (Matar cited in Khatib et al. 2014: 160) which was reinforced by his refusal to negotiate with the Israelis on the return of his son's body. Instead,

he waited until June, 1998, for a prisoner exchange deal to be made with Israel (*The Daily Star*, 2008). Subsequently, Nasrallah proclaimed his son a martyr to Lebanon and the resistance.

This is worth mentioning because Nasrallah's response in this way invoked notions of self-sacrifice, faith and bravery, similar to Churchill's references to "tears, blood and sweat" (Khatib et al. 2014: 156). As asserted by Corbett (1990 cited in Alkhirbash et al. 2014: 43), a speaker's willingness to sacrifice for the benefit of others can reflect a virtuous image, and it is the position in this thesis that such an "image" of Nasrallah plays a fundamental role in adding weight and credibility to the messages in his speeches and to the Party's capacity to increase its political support.

6.3 Hizbullah's media arm

Nasrallah's image is, of course, part of the broader image of the Party he leads and the way it connects to the Lebanese people. Notably, Hizbullah's communication strategy relies largely on traditional and submerged "informal infrastructures of action" such as mosques as social centres, Friday sermons, speeches, and rallies. The structure of these networks aims to build a system of "being, thinking and acting" that allows the Party to sustain itself over time (Deeb 2006). To this end, Hizbullah has developed numerous media institutions to promote the Party's participation in the Lebanese political system and to herald its inclusive political identity (Deeb 2008). Moreover, Hizbullah's compilation of videos showing its resistance operations serve to demonstrate the full impact of the emotional and dramatic power of religious symbols and narrative for community building (Matar cited in Khatib et al. 2014: 168).

This is arguably of particular importance to the Party's political strategy because Hizbullah's ability to successfully transition toward political moderation (pragmatism) relies to a significant degree on an effective communication network. After 2000, Hizbullah could reach audiences both inside and outside of Lebanon through its *al-Manar* satellite channel, and its newspaper and magazine outlets that include *al-Bilad*, *al-Wihda al-Islamiyya* and the monthly *al-Sabil*. The

focus of these outlets varies from private matters, to political and religious affairs (Deeb 2006; Saade 2015; Khatib et al. 2014: 42). In fact, Nasrallah's speeches, interviews and rallies are constructed by Hizbullah's media arm as dramatic political performances that demand urgent attention. For example, before Nasrallah is due to make a speech, *al-Manar* will begin broadcasting his previous speeches, with clips and images of Hizbullah fighters in battle, along with pictures of destroyed Israeli armour (Matar cited in Khatib et al. 2014: 174).

Given the defiant and disruptive nature of Hizbullah's messaging, the security around Hizbullah cadres and Nasrallah particularly is high. This has served the Party and the way its media institutions portray Nasrallah in two ways: first, it protects Nasrallah from domestic and international threats; and second, it elevates his role to an almost divine status, giving him what Khatib (2014:175) refers to as a "larger-than-life" celebrity role⁵⁴. This latter outcome is achieved because of a perpetual sense of threat surrounding the leader adds to the drama of the speech event and to Nasrallah's capacity to present "a powerful image of presence" to legitimise his request for support and obedience from the Lebanese people (Khatib 2014: 153). However, the constant threat to Nasrallah's personal security has led him to deliver most of his speeches by live video link rather than in person, which has arguably helped to elevate the perceived importance of his rare live appearances. Given the external "threat" to Nasrallah specifically and Hizbullah more broadly is typically related to the interrelationships between Party image, security for its members, religious rhetoric, and political strategy are worthy of consideration.

As for Nasrallah's response to the threats to his security, he stated during an interview with *Al-Akhbar* newspaper in August 2014, when asked about using Facebook:

Due to the security situation, I should stay away from anything related to mobile phones or the internet. Thus, I don't have a direct relationship with Facebook. However, I am always up to date on all sorts of

⁵⁴ In October, 2008 a rumour surfaced that Nasrallah had survived an assassination attempt through poison. Internal opponents of Nasrallah were accused. However, Hizbullah sources denied all such reports (Kaplan 2010).

discussions, rumours and conversations happening on Facebook, through reports and summaries on the issue.

Moreover, Nasrallah continues to remind his followers of prominent threats from Israel and insecurities in Lebanon as evidenced in a 2013 speech in which he proclaimed “we must be cautious and aware of all what is taking place around”; also, “there is an international-Arab resolution to crush Hizbullah.”⁵⁵ In turn, it is important to give some consideration in this thesis to these expressions of defiance in the face of danger by Nasrallah as they are arguably used by the leader to reflect the threats against Hizbullah more broadly. By placing such focus on security and defiance the Party heightens the drama surrounding its very existence as well as feeds into the fears of the Shi’ite community. That is, the threats to his existence reflect the threat to the Party’s capacity to protect Lebanese Shi’ites.

6.4 Hizbullah’s image management

Hizbullah has carefully managed its identity and messaging over the years to influence each of its stakeholders in different ways. Of interest to this thesis is the extent to which religion plays a role in the way Hizbullah seeks to assert such influence to enhance its political position. The organisation has media institutions that work simultaneously, on numerous fronts, such as television, print, outdoor messaging, and one-to-one communication. These media outlets combine to produce the same narrative and to ensure that “the message, images and symbols used in different spaces constantly reinforced each other” (Khatib et al. 2014: 188).

Hizbullah’s image as a Lebanese Islamist party is based on four interrelated elements that have persisted through time: being an ally of Iran; a resistance group to Israel; a Party committed to the liberation of Palestine; and a religious representative, and protector, of the Shi’ite community (Khatib et al. 2014: 43). To delve further into each of these elements:

⁵⁵ Alahednews (2006) Sayyed Nasrallah Delivers Speech on Resistance and Liberation Day, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=25839&cid=454#.WXsVk4V8jU4> (accessed 8 March 2016).

- Firstly, Hizbullah receives most of its funding and weaponry from Iran, and the Republic remains its predominant supporter in the region. Notably, when asked about Nasrallah's religious references, General Michel Aoun, head of the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) and an ally of Hizbullah since 2005, replied that Nasrallah's adherence to Iran is similar to the Catholic people's allegiance to the Vatican. Hence, even though Hizbullah's religious framework is identified through Iran's *Welayet Al-Faqih*, the Party's loyalty remains to Lebanon. Moreover, as Aoun claimed, Hizbullah has vowed to fight for and defend Lebanese interests and is serving as protector of the nation (Deeb 2008).
- Secondly, Hizbullah was founded as a resistance group to Israel, and continues to base the need for its existence on the imminent threat that Israel poses to Lebanon. This is a recurrent theme to emerge from within the rhetoric of Nasrallah's speeches.
- Thirdly, Hizbullah remains one of the few forces, be it an organization or a country, to champion the liberation of Palestine. This issue is at the forefront of the Party's rhetoric and further provides its supporters with a reason for its existence.
- Finally, due to sectarian segregation that divided power amongst different sects, political power is allocated on this basis (Traboulsi 2007). Accordingly, each political party is affiliated with a religious sect, and through this structure gains some power in the different government institutions and entities. The discourse of each political party is therefore directed to its supporters who are predominantly from the same sect. Political parties campaign for support in the areas with the highest concentration of their supporting sect. They then focus their activities in these areas to be seen to be providing the community and thus to gain more votes during parliamentary elections. Given the Shi'ite sect is marginalised in several areas in Lebanon, Hizbullah is seen to be lending a helping hand to the Shi'ite community via education, work-related, and social projects. Through its efforts, Hizbullah has positioned itself as the protector of the Shi'ite sect, not only in Lebanon, but across the Middle

East (Norton 2007). Nasrallah's speeches have frequently echoed fierce support for marginalised Shi'ites across the globe, with focus on Middle Eastern countries.

To further demonstrate Hizbullah's image management in relation to these four "elements", particularly in the messaging and discourse used by the Party, charts 1a-b-c-d present relevant analysis results for Nasrallah's speeches between 2000 and 2013. The statistical data presented in the charts contributes to the goal of this thesis by showing how Nasrallah's references to Iran, resistance of Israel, Palestine, and the Shi'ite community link religion either directly or indirectly to Hizbullah's political agenda. An examination is then undertaken to determine the extent to which Nasrallah's religious references can be regarded as a way for the Party to enhance its image and strengthen its capacity to balance the competing domestic and regional demands through increasingly pragmatic political decision-making and action-taking.

Due to the change in political climate in Lebanon after the assassination of Rafic Hariri, the former Lebanese prime minister in 2005⁵⁶, Nasrallah's speeches became more frequent and more charged, focusing on key messages about the Shi'ite sect that are repeated throughout. Previously, Hizbullah's focus was on reaffirming its image as a resistance movement for all of Lebanon, and the Party had widespread support, particularly as it was regarded as the force that liberated Lebanon from Israeli occupation (Norton 2007). Following the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon in May, 2000, the Party enjoyed widespread support from all sects and areas of Lebanon.

Notably, the Party was not represented in government or in the broader political spectrum at this time and it can reasonably be asserted that this afforded the Party certain cover for its operations and allowed it to keep its efforts low profile. However, as previously established, Hizbullah eventually did become part of the Lebanese government to preserve and represent a segment of the Shi'ite sect in

⁵⁶ The former Lebanese prime minister was assassinated in a car bomb in 2005. The Syrian regime was accused of the assassination and huge demonstrations followed his assassination demanding the withdrawal of Syrian political and military hegemony over Lebanon.
Analysis of Nasrallah's Speeches 2001-2013

Lebanon. Still, Nasrallah's speeches were not fuelled with sectarian messaging. Even after the organisation came under heavy criticism from the March 14 bloc when their actions were seen to "harm" Lebanon and its people, as was perceived to be the case in May, 2008 (See Chapter Four), Nasrallah's messaging remained neutral and focused on protecting Lebanon's sovereignty. However, the messaging landscape changed as is reflected in the fluctuating nature of Nasrallah's uses of religion (see below for more explanation of the change of messages).

6.4.1 Protector of Shi'ite community

Given the central position that the Shi'ite community has in Hizbullah's image as a resistance movement and its political status in Lebanon, references by the Party leader to Hizbullah as protector of the Shi'ite sect – which are inherently religious references – were analysed. Chart 1a presents the results of the analyses of Nasrallah's speeches showing such references were most pronounced in 2013 (4.46%), compared to their least frequent use in 2000 (1.79%). The chart demonstrates that little to no references were made in other years. The turning point in 2013 came with Hizbullah's highly public involvement in the Syrian war. The increased messaging on this theme can be accounted for by Hizbullah's need to recruit more fighters from the Shi'ite community for this war. The Party's involvement marked the first time that its operations had crossed borders to initiate offensive military rather than defensive tactics. Thus, more fighters were needed (*Foreign Policy* 2016). One of the key messages given focus in Nasrallah's speeches during this time was that their involvement in the Syrian war was to protect Shi'ite shrines in Syrian villages.

In turn, the increase in the number of references by Nasrallah to Hizbullah as protector of the Shi'ite communities can be explored through the lens of pragmatic politics. While Hizbullah had previously tried to maintain a sectarian-free language and to present itself as a party for Lebanon, it now found that to appeal to the Shi'ite public it needed to use discourse that the latter would be able to relate to. This war of resistance was no longer just against the national enemy of Lebanon, and no longer perceived only in terms of the threat to

Lebanon's sovereignty, it was now a war across borders in response to the need to protect a neighbouring nation (or more specifically a neighbouring regime). Hence, a shift was arguably taking place in the Party towards political pragmatism as it moved from taking action against threats to Lebanon's sovereignty from a common enemy, to taking action on grounds of religion, and the war became a noble and religious war, seen to protect a marginalized Shi'ite community across the region.

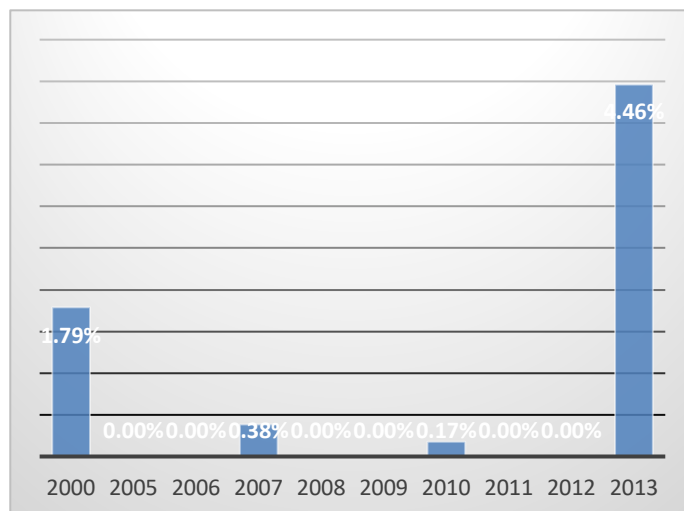


Chart 1a: Nasrallah's references to Hizbullah as a protector of the Shi'a sect in his speeches by year (2000-2013)

6.4.2 Hizbullah's relationship with Iran

The exact nature of Iran's influence on Hizbullah remains unclear to date. However, it is generally asserted that Iran's position is one of support for Hizbullah's efforts and for Nasrallah in the leadership role. Moreover, the sustainability of the Party continues to depend on the funding, weapons and political support from Syria and Iran. Nasrallah's references to Iran in his speeches can be considered as religious in nature given Hizbullah's commitment to the *Welayet al-Faqih* doctrine. As such, they were included in the speech analysis.

The data in Chart 1b shows that Nasrallah's references in his speeches to Hizbullah's close relationship with Iran remained relatively consistent over the Analysis of Nasrallah's Speeches 2001-2013

years, particularly in 2011 (6.61%), 2012 (4.75%) and 2010 (4.36%). The exceptions are 2005 and 2006, with no mention by the leader of the Party's close ties to Iran. In turn, to properly interpret these figures, one must consider the role played by the regional political landscape in Nasrallah's discourse, as it is this landscape that allowed for his speeches to remain timely and relevant. In the period from 2010 to 2012, Hizbullah's efforts were being channelled in two ways: to play a regional role as part of the axis of resistance against foreign intervention from Western and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations; and to position itself as a close ally to the Syrian regime and support for Iran's role in the region (Saade 2015). The discourse on strengthening the Party's alliance to Iran instilled a sense of power in its supporters, as Iran, and in turn Syria, were both in the international spotlight and growing in power during this period. Hizbullah emerged from being a national player, to a regional one.

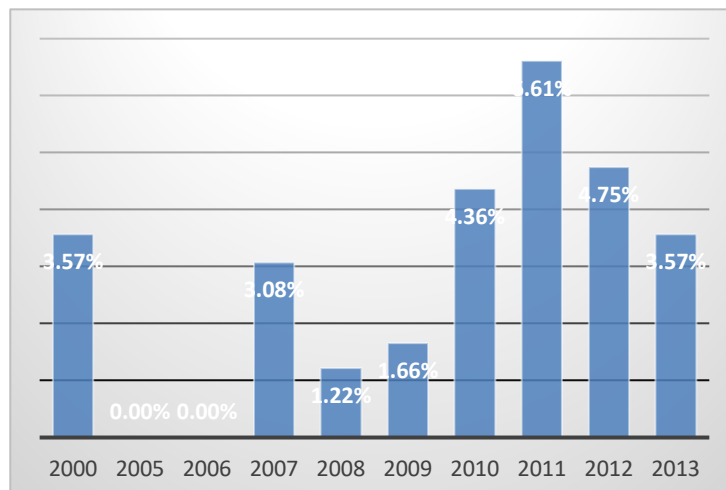


Chart 1b: Nasrallah's references to the Hizbullah-Iran relationship in his speeches by year (2000-2013)

The distinct lack of references to Hizbullah as protector of the Shi'ite sect and as ally to Iran in 2005 and 2006 may be explained due to the turbulence Hizbullah experienced as a Party during this time. Firstly, in February, 2005, former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri, was assassinated and initial reports sought to blame Syria and to accuse Hizbullah of being a co-conspirator in the

attack (Patrikarakos 2012). The second issue for the Party was the 2006 war with Israel, which greatly damaged the Party's reputation amongst its supporters, non-supporters, and global audience (Zisser 2009). The Party was vilified by many media outlets for both events and the subsequent establishment of the Special Tribunal on Lebanon (STL) after Hariri's assassination is regarded as a highly political act. As such, to distance the Party from these accusations, Nasrallah refrained from making references to Iran during this time to safeguard its image as independent from Syria and Iran. During the STL, a number of Hizbullah members were named as suspects in the assassination (Makdisi 2011). During this time, Nasrallah remained cautious not to infuse his discourse with both sectarian and Syria/Iran support, choosing to remain neutral. Thus, the contrasting levels of referencing to Hizbullah's role as protector of the Shi'ite demonstrate how the Party's developing pragmatism was influenced by local and regional events, and how Nasrallah employed *ijtihad* reasoning to manipulate his messaging to protect the Party's power base in response to the current political climate.

6.4.3 Hizbullah and Palestine

On the topic of Palestine, this issue continues to be debated at a regional and international level and remains a core issue in need of a resolution. Hizbullah positions itself as a defender of marginalised populations, fighting for the rights of those that resist foreign intervention and occupation (Fadlallah 2015). This topic has remained at the forefront of Nasrallah's speeches, with references to Hizbullah's support for Palestine remaining consistent throughout the years. Chart 1c shows this consistency in his references to Palestine from 2000 to 2013, particularly during 2012 (9.15%), 2008 (9.04%) and 2013 (8.04%).

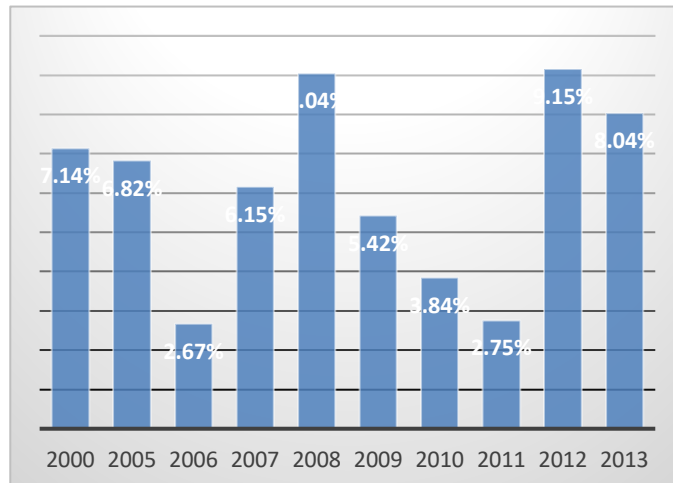


Chart 1c: Nasrallah's references to Hizbullah's support for Palestine in his speeches by year (2000-2013)

In order to maintain its position as a resistance movement in the absence of imminent threat from Israel, Nasrallah arguably made references to Palestine in his speeches to be seen as an advocate and protector of marginalised populations. Because the situation in Palestine is one that many local, regional and international stakeholders agree is in need of a resolution, the references to Palestine could be made repeatedly by Nasrallah to gain the support of the audience. As such, the analysis of Nasrallah's speeches for their references to Palestine provides further insight into the way he draws on religious conflict at the regional level to reaffirm the legitimacy of Hizbullah as a resistance party, while also messaging to Lebanese Shi'ites particularly that the Party is committed to the fight against oppression (or for their rights).

6.4.4 Resistance movement against Israel

When further analysing Nasrallah's speeches, it emerged that he references Hizbullah as a resistance movement against Israel on the grounds of religion. Chart 1d reveals that such references consistently appear in his speeches from 2000 to 2013. Notably, there is a spike in the number of his references made during 2007 (12.31%) and 2008 (15.65%), which is most likely due to the growing pressure posed by the Lebanese government for Hizbullah to disarm. These

changes began surfacing after the 2006 war, where Hizbullah was viewed by some political factions (namely March14 political group) as having engaged in an unnecessary war and contributed to dragging Lebanon into an ongoing conflict (Parasiliti 2013). Similarly, in 2008, after political moves to disband Hizbullah's phone network in the Lebanese airport, clashes erupted on the streets between the Party's supporters and rival political parties (See Chapter One of this thesis). Again, Hizbullah's image was tarnished amongst the population and heavily criticized on a political level (Khatib 2013). This led to calls for the disarmament of Hizbullah, to lessen its power and influence in Lebanon. As such, when analysing Nasrallah's speeches, the repeated discourse of the Party on the basis of religion, was a topic that thousands if not millions in Lebanon could relate to and identify with. To reiterate, each political party in Lebanon works to protect supporters from its own sect, before extending its efforts to a national scale (see Chapter One) (Traboulsi 2007).

Therefore, to gain momentum and rally support from the Shi'ite community, references to resistance on the grounds of religion aided Hizbullah in protecting itself from pressure to disarm. Also, continually citing Israel and its past aggression towards Lebanon, as well as creating an aura of the imminent threat of war erupting with Israel, aids the Party in maintaining its share of power. Thus, when discussing the issue of disarming the Party, Nasrallah links the need for the Party to retain its weaponry to the fight against Israel and to the protection of the Shi'ite community (See Chapter Four). These religion-based references therefore enable the Party to adopt a politically pragmatic argument; namely, weapons mean better protection of Shi'ites and Lebanon, while also serving the interests of the Party; namely, weapons improve the chances of Party survival.

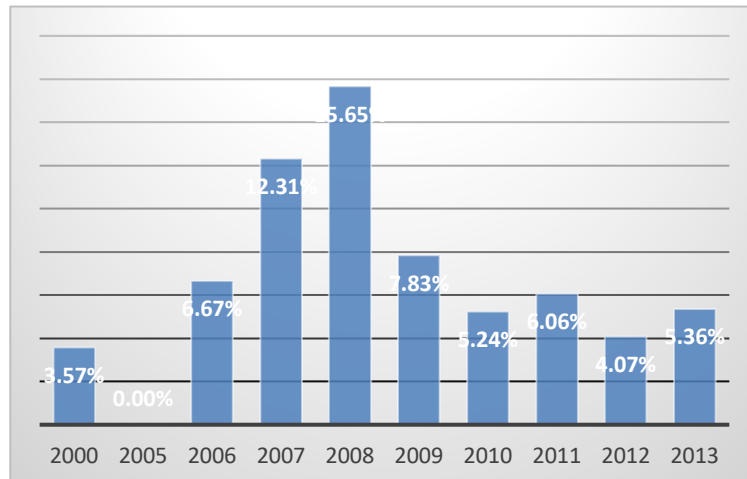


Chart 1d: Nasrallah's references to religion-based resistance to Israel in his speeches by year (2000-2013)

In sum, the analysis of Nasrallah's speeches revealed that religion is apparent in Hizbullah's political rhetoric to a large extent via references to the four main domains comprising Hizbullah's image as a resistance organisation / political party; namely protector of the Shi'ite sect, resistance movement against Israel, ally of Iran, and supporter of Palestine. As revealed in the discussion, these references can be further examined through the lens of political pragmatism to gain insights into the way the timing and frequency of the religious references assist Nasrallah to affirm Hizbullah's role as a relevant resistance group as well as a viable political party.

6.5 Nasrallah's speech style

Cicero (Glover 2011: 66) emphasised the usefulness of emotional expressions by a speaker to win over the audience, particularly during the opening and ending of a speech. The "emotional expressions" in Nasrallah's speeches of interest to this study are his religious references, and these have been analysed in relation to his speech style in general. This is an important aspect of this study because, as asserted by Cicero above, speech style is critical to the capacity of the speaker to win over the audience; and winning over the audience is arguably of critical importance to Nasrallah if he is to further the Party's political strategy.

Nasrallah often attempts to capture the audience's attention with his opening and closing statements, which always carry religious salutations. Nasrallah's speeches always start with:

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, praise be to Allah, lord of the worlds, prayers and peace be upon our prophet Mohammed, his household and chosen companions, and all the prophets and messengers [...]

His speeches also always end with:

May God bless you all, and raise our martyr to his heavens, along with the martyrs who preceded him and God willing our course will only be filled with victory festivities.

Nasrallah's use of a traditional religious greeting to open his speeches conveys a holy image and encourages the audience members to grant him their full attention. Arguably, Nasrallah has become the embodiment of Hizbullah and as such the Party's political success is highly dependent on his public appeal. "Nasrallah alive is better than Nasrallah dead". These words were uttered by Tsivikia Yahzikali, an Arabic affairs analyst for Channel Ten in Israel during a documentary titled *Nasrallah in Their Eyes* in 2014 on *Al-Mayadeen* TV. They revealed much about the fascination, and perhaps obsession, with Nasrallah's influence as a political actor.

During the documentary, speech experts and body language interpreters from Israel identified what they described as the points of strength in Nasrallah's speeches. It is important to note that there is no evidence to suggest that Nasrallah receives oratory coaching but instead, he prepares his own speeches. The elements included his hand gestures (denoting power and trust), facial traits (e.g. thin lips resembling comfort, beard and moustache concealing his softness), and fixated look to the camera (interpreted as a sign of directing the speech to whoever is watching and thus encouraging the viewer to feel that he is talking to them direct). Other elements identified as influential to the success of Nasrallah's speech-making included his tone, dialect, and occasional humour. The

documentary also highlighted the contexts in which Nasrallah's speeches are delivered as important to their overall impact (*Al-Mayadeen* 2014).

6.5.1 Religious storytelling

A key element contributing to the persuasiveness of Nasrallah's speeches is the religious rhetoric conveyed through storytelling. For instance, Nasrallah's references to the tragic Battle of Karbala (discussed in further detail below) are attempts to link historical/religious events to current events in Lebanon and in the region through storytelling. Deeb (2006) asserted in her book, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon* that the commemoration of *Ashoura* is associated with the shared narratives, practices and meanings of Shi'ite identity. Deeb (2006) demonstrated her findings through documenting the *majlis a'za'*⁵⁷ and *nadbat*⁵⁸ of *Ashoura* that are hosted by *jamiya'* in Lebanon. She also highlighted the visibility of religion in Hizbullah's areas of control such as Dahiya and some areas of southern Lebanon. The power of the *Ashoura* commemoration lies not only in its identification of cultural practices, but also in affirming the collective Shi'ite identity of victimisation, tragedy and captivity. It reminds Shi'ites of their constant struggle for recognition and solidifies their quest for survival. This has relevance to our understanding of Nasrallah as a skilled orator and why he continuously reminds Lebanese Shi'ites of their persecution in historical and present periods. The *majalis*⁵⁹ served to teach religious, social and political lessons and to link the important meaning of *Ashoura* to current times (Deeb 2006: 143). This is reflected by one of Deeb's interlocutors during her fieldwork in Lebanon in 2000. Dalal describes current day *Ashoura* lessons by saying:

They recite the same story about Husayn. But the lecture differs. It depends on the audience and the recitor and the topic and his own relationship to *Ashoura*. But they are better than before, because they *are being tied to our daily lives*, this linking of the past to the present and the future, this is better. Before we used to just go and listen to the story. Now, we are not just going to cry for Imam Husayn, we are going to

⁵⁷ Funeral gatherings

⁵⁸ A ritual practiced during the remembrance of *Ashoura* where individuals cry and mourn the tragedy of Karbala.

⁵⁹ Ceremonies

learn from his school. The lecture is important; *it is clarifying why you are crying*, and why Imam Husayn was martyred (my emphasis, Deeb 2006: 143).

Dalal's insight not only sheds light on the central place that historical events of religious significance have in shaping Shi'ite's understanding of present-day context, but also the role of the orator and his/her potential to shape the thoughts and opinions of the audience when linking the present to the past within a religious framework. Deeb's field observations revealed that some orators' objectives were to stir emotions and to make people "cry" rather than to explain historical events accurately (Deeb 2006: 142). Such objectives are important for consideration in relation to Nasrallah's speeches given that narration represents the core of Shi'ism and is a powerful force in Shi'ite theology. Based on such considerations, it is clearly evident that Nasrallah's speech style reflects his awareness of the importance of maintaining the Shi'ite tradition in speech making of including allusions to past religious events. More importantly, this thesis argues that Nasrallah uses the tradition in a way that is politically pragmatic. That is, his speech style to "relive" Ashoura and other religious events provides Hizbullah with the opportunity to give weight to its domestic and regional actions in the eyes of the Shi'ite community and thus protect its position in the Lebanese political landscape.

Shi'ism is defined by "its passion for Husayn, whose martyr's death is the dramatic experience that lies at the beating heart of Shi'a development" (Nasr 2007: 43). Alternatively, the use of the *Ashoura* commemoration also demonstrates the collective Shi'ite identity mobilized for political purposes. For example, Shi'ites often used the Husayn story to situate their conflicts in modern times. Examples include its use against the Shah in Iran in 1979, against Israeli troops in southern Lebanon, and against Saddam Hussein's troops in Iraq following the first Gulf War in 1991 (Nasr 2007: 43). This claim can be measured along with Hizbullah's branding of itself as the ultimate and necessary protector to Shi'ites and, on a larger measure, of any "oppressed" group. The identification of Hizbullah as a fighter of oppressors stems from the rhetoric initiated by Khomeini when created the division between the "oppressed" and the

“oppressors” (see Chapter One of this thesis) in which Hizbullah categorised itself- as a result- as vanguard of the oppressed. This rhetoric was then used in its claims for fighting against Israel, aiding some Palestinian groups and later in its intervention in Syrian war.

Nasrallah’s use of religious rhetoric through storytelling in his speeches was confirmed in the content analysis. Chart 2 shows this type of storytelling was particularly evident when Nasrallah was speaking at Shi’ite festivals (73 times) and Hizbullah celebrations (57 times), and to a somewhat lesser extent, while talking at Islamic events (19 times) and Iran-related events (19 times).

These results are significant because they further demonstrate the key role that religion has in the political rhetoric of Hizbullah to win the support of the Shi’ite community. The more frequent use of religious storytelling when speaking at Shi’ite festivals and Hizbullah celebrations etc. demonstrates the way in which Nasrallah attempts to appeal to the different audiences’ perspectives and sensibilities when conveying a political message.

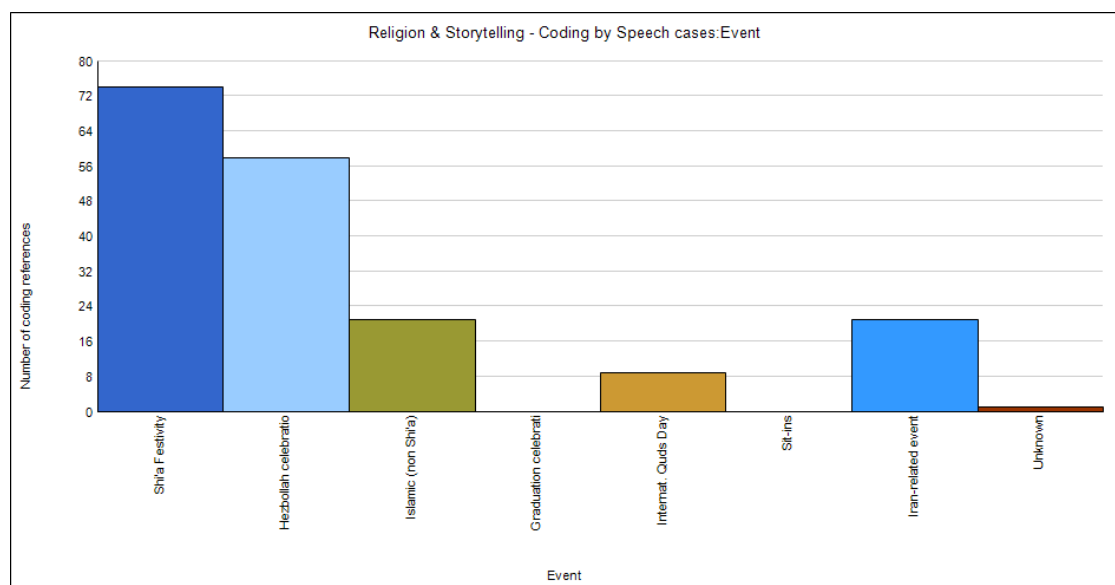


Chart 2: Nasrallah’s use of religion-based storytelling in his speeches by event (2000-2013)

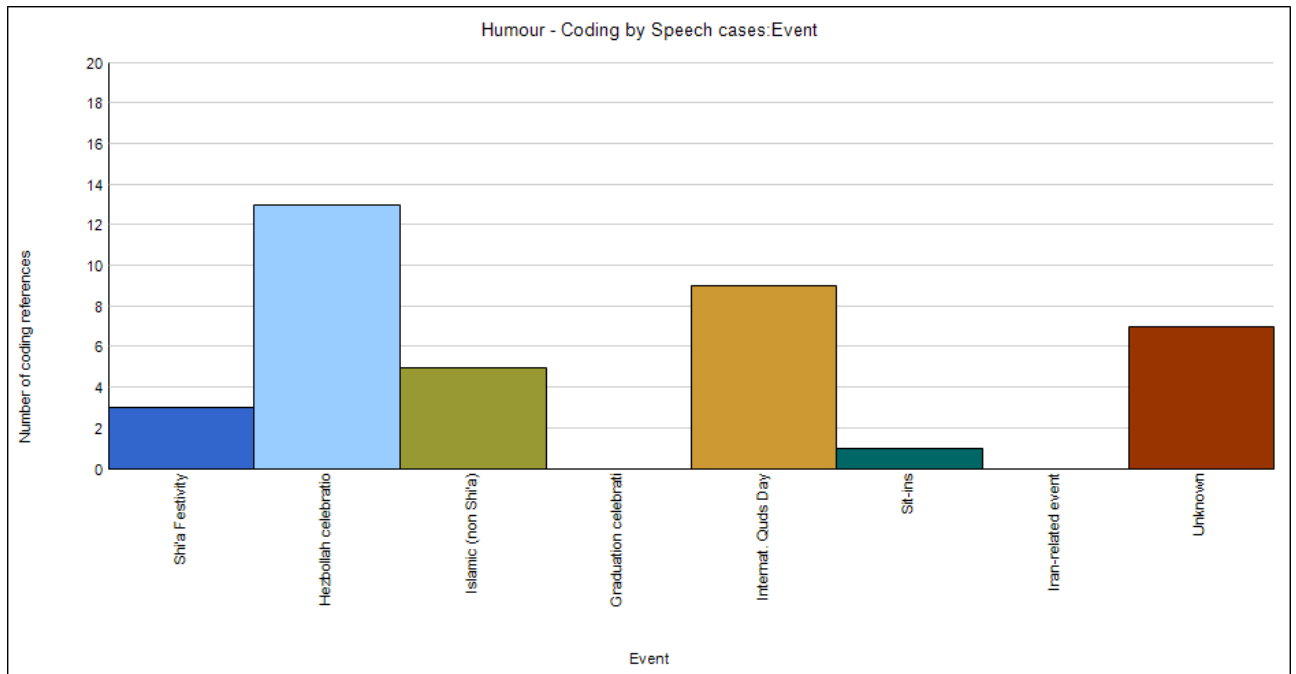
Nasrallah's awareness of the power of narration in Shi'ism shapes his speech delivery style and his attempts to enhance his credibility and listenability as a narrator. His Shi'ite audience/supporters are familiar with the story telling format and Nasrallah's use of the method in his political rhetoric arguably helps to increase his credibility as a leader and authority figure. Nasrallah's speech

Chart 3: Nasrallah's use of humour in his speeches by event (2000-2013)

delivery style in combination with Hizbullah's branding demonstrates the ability of Hizbullah to present Nasrallah as a larger-than-life figure with full religious credibility.

6.5.2 Irony and humour

Nasrallah's ability to apply contextual considerations to the contents of his speeches is also evident in his use of humour and irony. The results from the content analysis presented in Chart 3 reveal that Nasrallah's use of humour and irony was particularly evident in his speeches during Hizbullah celebrations (13 uses), International Quds Day (9 uses), and other occasions labelled as "unknown" which are the speeches made during the month of Ramadan.



Irony is increasingly used in modern advertising to appeal to audiences (Khatib 2013: 91). In turn, Mohammad Kawtharani, the creative director of Idea Creation – the public relations company that designed Hizbullah’s campaign in 2006 – told *Al-Ahd* magazine that Hizbullah commonly used the tactic of double messaging in its advertisements to create irony for the audience. To illustrate his point, he cited the example of when Hizbullah juxtaposed a red banner above the slogan “extremely accurate targets” with images of the destruction of Beirut’s southern suburbs.

The following sections focus on the results of the analysis of Nasrallah’s speeches related to Nasrallah’s use of religious ceremonies and other events as contexts of purpose. In turn, the descriptive and quantitative data reveal how Nasrallah uses religious rhetoric on these occasions to confirm Hizbullah’s religious identity and to forge links between religion and resistance to the audience.

6.6 Time and place



Photo Courtesy of google.com

Cicero posited that the best speech writer/speaker is the one who understands the state of mind of the audience (Glover 2011: 56). This assertion is based on the premise that each speaking occasion has its own requirements and for the speaker to succeed he/she must produce the speech that fits the occasion. Thus, the context within which the speech is placed will in many ways shape the nature of the speech, its impact on the audience, and thus its capacity to achieve its purpose.

Hizbullah's strategy to deliver speeches on special occasions – religious and otherwise – such as Jerusalem Day as well as at events when the need arises provides a pretext for the Party to present its position on political developments (Khatib 2014: 110). Table 1 lists some of the established occasions that Hizbullah celebrates, which often carry religious significance:

Table 6.1 Occasions of religious significance celebrated by Hizbullah

<i>Ashoura</i> Day	Resistance and Liberation Day
<i>Al-Quds</i> Day	Birthday of Khomeini
Birthday of Prophet Mohammed	Start of Holy Month of Ramadan
Martyrs Day	

Speeches are also delivered by the Party during specific domestic and regional events. Table 2 below reveals that these events reflect diverse affairs including

government elections in Lebanon, violence against Palestinians, and the Syrian Civil War:

Table 6.2 Hizbullah speeches on domestic and regional affairs

Government/ Parliamentary elections	2000 Israeli withdrawal
2004-05 Lebanon political instability	July War (2006)
Gaza Wars/Freedom flotilla	UN Resolution on Lebanon
2006-08 Lebanese political crisis	2007 violence in the Palestinian camps
Special Tribunal for Lebanon	Lebanon political assassinations
Prisoner swap	Syrian Civil War
Imad Mughniyah Assassination	Ethiopian Airlines Flight 409
2011 Arab uprisings	Party's policy initiatives (<i>Al-Waad</i> project)

6.6.1 Use of religious ceremonies

An analysis of Nasrallah's use of rhetoric and speech style is often framed within the impact of his speeches on the Shi'ite community. Integral to his oratorical power is his ability to communicate his remarkable understanding of the vulnerabilities and aspirations of the Shi'ite community in Lebanon, and to address these elements directly. Nasrallah uses speeches to consolidate his political position as Party leader and to reinforce the perception that he is "close" to the everyday experience of Lebanese Shi'ites. Amri Nir, an Israeli Hizbullah specialist, noted that Nasrallah's endorsement of the delivery of social services such as electricity and education was the reason for this widespread support (Zisser 2009; Azani 2010).

Furthermore, Nasrallah's rare public appearances are considered the back-bone of the Party's ability to forge its connection with Shi'ites. Some public events such as Hizbullah's campaign against the Special Tribunal on Lebanon (STL) for instance, are part of the "repertoire" of Hizbullah's special occasions and are created to make a political point (Khatib 2014: 110). As such, the context of Nasrallah's speeches is used purposefully for the delivery of ideological propaganda as well as for the use of religion for political manoeuvring. For example, Nasrallah linked the STL to the resistance movement and claimed that

it posed a general threat to resistance and aimed to destroy the Party. Therefore, the speech content and its context are what provide Nasrallah with the opportunity to establish and affirm Hizbullah's religious identity within the Shi'ite community.

Norton argues that under Imam Musa al-Sadr, "considerable influential religious commemorations became vehicles for building communal solidarity and political consciousness" (1987: 41). Therefore, religious occasions can be a useful context in which to mobilise Shi'ite support for Hizbullah, which enables the Party to strengthen its position politically, socially and religiously. In turn, Nasrallah's speeches suggest that he is aware of the power of speech in its right context to mobilise Hizbullah followers and thus help the Party to achieve its objectives.

6.6.1.1 Battle of Karbala

Significant Shi'ite religious occasions are of significance to examine the way Nasrallah reinforces his messages with religious rhetoric. For instance, in 2000 on the day of commemoration for the Battle of Karbala, Nasrallah affirmed the Party's pledge to resistance, stating: "...on the fortieth day of Abi Abdullah, we confirm again that here blood triumphs over the sword..." Nasrallah continued to then link the notion of resistance to martyrdom; "...We meet here to celebrate the victory achieved by martyrdom and blood..." In 2003, on the same religious occasion, Nasrallah also said in his speech in response to the American invasion of Iraq; "Tomorrow will be similar to what happened in Lebanon on the first of Ashoura after the Israeli invasion of 1982 [...]". Comments such as these from Nasrallah are insightful in that they illustrate how he links religion to the political agenda of the Party to bolster the Party position. Specifically, Nasrallah makes reference to martyrdom in Karbala on many occasions (e.g. it in relation to STL, the fight against Israel, and the civil war in Syria) to reaffirm to his listeners that the fight against oppression must continue. In doing so, he links the actions of the Party to martyrdom in the resistance movement and remind the listener of the importance of their support for the Party (Khatib et al. 2014).

The Battle of Karbala on October 10th, 680AD has served as a pivot around Shi'ite practices of mourning, commemoration and differentiation from Sunnis. The Analysis of Nasrallah's Speeches 2001-2013

battle of Karbala draws on experiences of injustice and for the need to resist wherever injustice exists (Khatib et al. 2014: 53). Imam Hussein and his followers realised before the battle against Yazid's army that they were destined for defeat, yet they continued to fight. This battle serves to commemorate the need for fighting injustice and defiance, "by creating a Foucauldian sense of political spiritualism" (Al-Agha 2011: 48-49).

In turn, Nasrallah (in 2008) uses the day of commemoration for the Battle of Karbala to condemn the invasion of Iraq and thus to build support for the Iraqi resistance groups, stating:

[...] tomorrow, those who can read should read and search for the truth in the eyes of the millions gathered in Karbala. This truth will say that the 40th anniversary of Imam Al-Hussein's death will mark the beginning of the end of the American age in Iraq and the region, a fact that the next few years will confirm [...].⁶⁰

Arguably, such religiosity in Nasrallah's speeches further demonstrates the Party's use of religion in a politically pragmatic way to strengthen its political position. If one accepts the assertion by Saade (2015: 724) that Hizbullah's remembrances of its dead or martyrs provided a "tool-kit for action", it can be argued that Nasrallah's efforts to relate a significant religious event of the past to current regional conflicts aim primarily to legitimise Hizbullah's ongoing resistance stance to listeners as well as strengthen its political position. Indeed, the commemoration of *Ashoura*, the rhetoric of Karbala, and Hizbullah martyrs have been combined under the notion of martyrology by Nasrallah to show how the Karbala incident could be applied as a lesson in the present. This is arguably a politically pragmatic act as it is employed by the Party to mobilise support for its fight against Israel and to strengthen its position in domestic politics.

Moreover, this is made possible given the sense of community the Karbala remembrance provides to Shi'ites. As Fischer (1980 cited in Torab 2007: 19-21)

⁶⁰ The Saker (2009) Important speech by Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah about the recent elections in Lebanon, available at: <http://thesaker.is/important-speech-by-hezbollah-secretary-general-hassan-nasrallah-about-the-recent-elections-in-lebanon/> (accessed 8 March 2016).
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explains, “Karbala provides a model for living and a mnemonic for thinking about how to live”. This was evident in Nasrallah’s speech in 2008 when he said:

It was with this Hussaini, Karabalan logic, you rejected humiliation and shame, and insisted on continuing the confrontation and resistance, despite the destruction of tens of thousands of your homes, and the fall of thousands of martyrs and the wounded men, women and children, with few supporters by your side, abandoned by those close to you, and the collusion of those far from you.⁶¹

In turn, although there is some debate among scholars as to whether the references to Karbala are made to empower the Shi’ite community or to solidify Hizbullah’s grip on power, this thesis argues that the references are made to achieve both outcomes. It is clearly evident from Nasrallah’s use of language such as “rejected”, “insisted” and “resistance” that there is a focus on providing Shi’ites with a sense of empowerment. But it is also difficult to refute the assertion from Amal Saad-Ghorayeb that “the ultimate goal” of the Hizbullah rhetoric “is to control and shape the people” (Khatib interview with Saad-Ghorayeb 2011: 49), which Nasrallah appears to attempt to do with the Shi’ite community by feeding into their history of oppression and using of the Karbala rhetoric to pressure them into compliance with the Party’s political agenda.

Consequently, the mourning gatherings that Hizbullah holds across Lebanon to commemorate the nights of *Ashoura* are used by the Party to emphasise the fixed path of the Islamic resistance in the face of Zionist occupation. In turn, the centrality of Hizbullah’s strategy to reach out to and mobilise Shi’ites, and the degree of its success is reflected in the results of a September 2013 Pew poll of Shi’ite Muslims in Lebanon which indicated that close to 90% of the respondents had a favourable opinion of Hizbullah. Indeed, the same poll was conducted across eleven Islamic countries and showed that only 42% of the respondents (both Shi’ite and Sunni Muslims) had an unfavourable opinion of the organisation (Pew Research Centre, 2013). Hence, the Party’s practices serve to

⁶¹ The Saker (2009) Important speech by Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah about the recent elections in Lebanon, available at: <http://thesaker.is/important-speech-by-hezbollah-secretary-general-hassan-nasrallah-about-the-recent-elections-in-lebanon/> (accessed 8 March 2016).

summon the Shi'ite community as a collective while concurrently granting a supreme value on any individual who chooses to sacrifice himself to the cause.

A similar use of Shi'ite religious occasions by Nasrallah as a context to establish links between resistance and religion was during his speech on the day of the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein in 2006. Of note on this occasion – a breakfast hosted by the Council for the Support of the Islamic Resistance – is the way in which Nasrallah established a link for his audience between the martyrdom of Imam Hussein to have the land returned “with honour and dignity”, and Hizbullah’s request/demand to have its prisoners “return to us with honour and dignity”⁶². The intention of Nasrallah in being explicit in his language to link resistance to religion and martyrdom is to give justification to the resistance and to garnish public support. In forging this connection between resistance and religion, Nasrallah can then use religious grounds to justify, and as an attempt to validate, the involvement of the resistance movement in other conflicts such as the Syrian civil war. This is evidenced in a speech by Nasrallah in late 2006 where he stated: “According to what we believe in, to our culture and our faith, Samir and our brothers in prison deserve our sacrifice, which we are ready for[...]”.⁶³

6.6.2 Day of celebration of resistance and liberation

A context also used by Nasrallah to engage in religious rhetoric to promote the cause for resistance was the day of celebration of resistance and liberation. In a speech in 2005 to mark this occasion, Nasrallah stated;

[...] we are here to celebrate once again; one of God almighty’s days on which he generously granted the mujahidin, the patient and steadfast people of this country, the victory and dignity they deserve.⁶⁴

⁶² Alahednews (2006) Sayyed Nasrallah calls for a strict investigation into Sunday’s events, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=691&cid=438#.WW6u9oV8jU4> (accessed 8 March 2016).

⁶³ Alahednews (2006) Sayyed Nasrallah calls on European parliaments to issue laws banning insults, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=693&cid=438#.WW6uaIV8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

⁶⁴ The Saker (2009) Important speech by Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah about the recent elections in Lebanon, available at: <http://thesaker.is/important-speech-by-hezbollah-secretary-general-hassan-nasrallah-about-the-recent-elections-in-lebanon/> (accessed 8 March 2016).

Nasrallah thus not only uses speeches to remind his followers of their pledge to the resistance movement, but also as a platform to demonstrate resilience and his power to his foes.

Nasrallah also used the day of celebration of resistance and liberation in 2006 as the context to respond to the July War criticisms. During his speech Nasrallah claimed:

We, as I said in previous speeches, do not want war. We did not even want the July War. They wanted this war for which they placed objectives on the level of the Middle East as a whole, and it was they who pushed the situation into this direction. In all cases, precaution is our duty, thank God if no war erupts, for 'and enough is God for the believers in their fight', and if God forbid Lebanon was faced with a new challenge we would be able to meet this challenge. However, I tell you that preparedness and preparations for war are the most important means of war prevention. This is what is called a balance of terror and deterrence.⁶⁵

6.6.2.1 *Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Day*

Furthermore, *Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Day* was used by Nasrallah as a context in which to reinforce the significance of religious obligations to his audience. For example, during the tribute of *Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Day* in 2008, Nasrallah linked safeguarding the Palestinian cause to a holy quest made to God. Indeed, Nasrallah consistently attempts to strengthen the power and impact of his speeches with citations from the *Qur'an* and references to the Prophet Mohammed and his descendants (Matar cited in Khatib et al. 2014: 173).

Thus, Nasrallah uses the context of Shi'ite religious celebrations as a way to tie Hizbullah resistance to religious values and principles. Ending on a note of irony, Nasrallah identified how some religious groups use religion to serve their political objectives, a notion that Hizbullah adopts through the use of the martyrdom doctrine, Karbala narrative, and *taklif shari* as a para-military command. Nasrallah remarked in 2007:

⁶⁵ The Saker (2009) Important speech by Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah about the recent elections in Lebanon, available at: <http://thesaker.is/important-speech-by-hezbollah-secretary-general-hassan-nasrallah-about-the-recent-elections-in-lebanon/> (accessed 8 March 2016).
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Unfortunately, some leaders in Lebanon with no political plan, without ideology nor persuasion or a civilized thought, unable to accommodate a large group of people, they work through his/their religious denomination by raising their fear from other religions to strengthen his/their control over them. This is happening in Lebanon and among all Lebanese religious denominations. There is someone without a political project, speech or literature within their religion except only to frighten his/their own people from others.⁶⁶

The following sections explore how Nasrallah uses his speeches to promote a discourse on resistance. In turn, descriptive and quantitative data results are provided on themes related to linking religion to resistance, building a culture of resistance, and the promise of divine victory.

6.7 Hizbullah and the Discourse of Resistance

For Hizbullah, justice can only be achieved by appropriating *moqawama* (resistance) as a discourse and as a practice to fight oppression, as well as to fight Israel. In contrast to the armed struggle against Israel by leftist and secular forces in the 1980s – mainly Palestinian factions – Hizbullah identified *moqawama* with Islamic rather than nationalist values in order to distinguish itself from other groups (Azani 2010). Therefore, the Party's image of resistance – linked with Islamic discourse – along with narratives of suffering, heroism, defiance and victory, is reinforced daily through various media outlets (Saade 2015; Khatib et al. 2014: 49).

Hizbullah situates its resistance operations within the necessity to fight the oppressors/Israel and to protect those who are suffering. For Hizbullah, this is done within the doctrine of martyrdom and *jihad*. Nasrallah explained in 2007:

I am talking about a movement that possesses a high degree of awareness, faith and knowledge that is popular and filled with passion and enthusiasm. It knows its path and is committed to its objectives with the vibrant determination of the youth. The various scenes in which this vital phenomenon reveals itself include: the resistance, political work,

⁶⁶ The Saker (2009) Important speech by Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah about the recent elections in Lebanon, available at: <http://thesaker.is/important-speech-by-hezbollah-secretary-general-hassan-nasrallah-about-the-recent-elections-in-lebanon/> (accessed 8 March 2016).
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university presence, various institutions, diverse activities and all the fields and arenas.⁶⁷

Resistance is also a key Shi'ite paradigm as the entire edifice of the Shi'ite faith is situated within narratives of resistance, sacrifice and endurance (Deeb 2006; Nasr 2007). Therefore, using the perception of Shi'ites as victims to strengthen Hizbullah's political representation among this community allows the Party to justify its role as the guardian of the Shi'ites. Hizbullah's ability to gain control over Shi'ites and its use of religious justifications such as *jihad* commit Shi'ites to conflicts that best fit Hizbullah's plan. Therefore, *jihad* is an ideologically pragmatic notion to Hizbullah that is employed to attain political hegemony over national resistance and the whole Shi'ite community.

6.7.1 Speeches linking religion and resistance

The content analysis of Nasrallah's speeches reveals that he creates a strong link between religion and the resistance movement, a theme which is promoted in his speeches across a broad range of contexts. The data in Chart 4 show that Nasrallah correlates religion and resistance in his speeches at heightened degrees with 256 references. This is principally due to the foundation of Hizbullah being based on religious doctrines. The Party advocates a religious paradigm in all of its efforts, with its slogan taken directly from the *Quran*: "Fa inna Hizbullah hum al ghaliboon," which translates to 'The Party of God is the victorious.'

In addition, the reason for Hizbullah's existence is to be the force of resistance against the oppressor. In this regard, to rally the support of potential fighters and the general community, a religious connotation is required. Such a connotation helps people to believe in a higher cause to which their actions and potential martyrdom is connected (in Islam, heaven is promised to martyrs and, in the Lebanese community, being a martyr is considered honourable). This theme is played out prior to the fighters being recruited by feeding the community messages pertaining to *jihad*, a noble religious fight, and by uniting the community in their refusal of oppression by external parties. The theme of

⁶⁷ The Saker (2009) Important speech by Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah about the recent elections in Lebanon, available at: <http://thesaker.is/important-speech-by-hezbollah-secretary-general-hassan-nasrallah-about-the-recent-elections-in-lebanon/> (accessed 8 March 2016).
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religion and oppression is also relayed during the battle itself, with frequent references in Nasrallah's speeches to advancements in the battles, with fighters being commended for their strength or their martyrdom. This theme extends to the time following a fighter's death, with organisations with names such as "Martyr Association" or "Families of Martyrs" set up to care for their families. Access to funding, education and healthcare are provided, thus creating a stronger community, and linking all parties back to Hizbullah.

Another theme embedded in Nasrallah's speeches is Lebanese nationalism; referenced 247 times. These references are due to Hizbullah being marginalised by the Lebanese political class following the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri, the 2006 war with Israel, and the 2008 clashes involving Hizbullah that broke out on the streets of Lebanon. Politicians have continually marginalised the group, referencing them as an "external" force that does not work for the greater good of Lebanon. They often vilify the Party and its leader, and have consistently called for the Party to disarm (see Chapters One, Two, Three, and Four). Accordingly, to strengthen Hizbullah's position within the framework of Lebanese society, Nasrallah continually reminds the people that Hizbullah is a Lebanese Party, working for the country's sovereignty and protecting it against the oppressor, namely Israel. In his speeches, Nasrallah makes numerous references to Lebanese nationalism, and frequently calls for people to come together, as well as for opposing parties to find a resolution to their differences. Also, whenever there is a national crisis, Nasrallah seeks not to take sides, but rather to present a viewpoint that will result in the greater good of society, using phrases to show that he cares for the community and is opposed to foreign intervention.

Moreover, Nasrallah made multiple connections linking religion to community development in Lebanon (58 references), regional conflicts such as support for Palestine (183 references), and international affairs such as the Shi'ite cause (8 references).

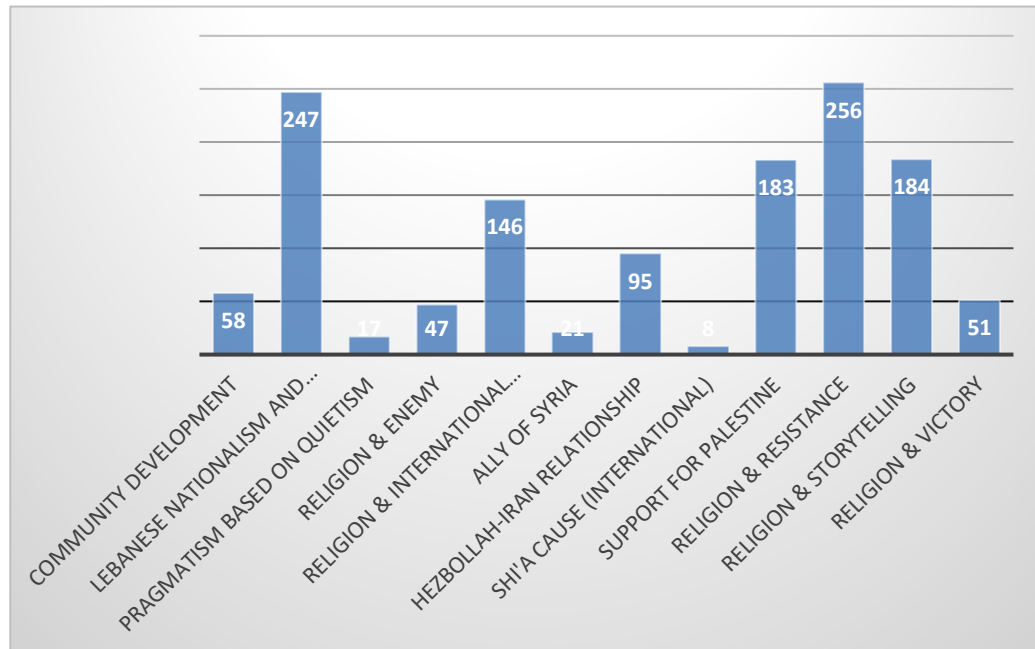


Chart 4: Nasrallah's references to religion in his speeches by topic of discussion (2000-2013)

6.7.2 Culture of resistance

Nasrallah's justification for promoting a culture of resistance relies heavily on the Karbala doctrine. Nasrallah's references to Karbala in present day contexts in his speeches is done to encourage Shi'ite Lebanese to stand up and fight when in danger – danger that Nasrallah reiterates constantly. Such references have been evident in Nasrallah's speeches such as:

This is not a culture of death; the culture of death is when, you are killed as a lion, you thence transform into a sheep. When you as a lion, are killed, then your children come to surrender their heads to the executioner... that is the culture of death! But this, the culture of life, is when a lion among us is killed, our offspring know their enemy and seek revenge and to stop the killing, usurpation and occupation, to dignify the nation.⁶⁸

Therefore, the development of Shi'ites' political spiritualism by Hizbullah is employed for strategic purposes. This is not to claim that Hizbullah is the only Shi'ite group in Lebanon that does so. However, Hizbullah's branding as the only

⁶⁸ The Saker (2009) Important speech by Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah about the recent elections in Lebanon, available at: <http://thesaker.is/important-speech-by-hezbollah-secretary-general-hassan-nasrallah-about-the-recent-elections-in-lebanon/> (accessed 8 March 2016).
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successful resistance group linked to Islam that aims to improve the social status of Shi'ites has put the Party in a strong political position.

The uses of Islamic themes for political purposes is of course not restricted to Hizbullah. Other Islamist movements (such as Hamas in Gaza) have used a similar strategy to promote a collective identity. However, what is unique to Hizbullah is its focus on maintaining a continuous interchange of mutually held knowledge adapted from everyday situations and claiming it as its own (Khatib et al. 2014: 40). To clarify, the Party attempts to justify its legitimacy as both resistor of Israel and protector of Shi'ites by shaping the information in the discursive arena to suit its political ends. By linking the threats to Shi'ites posed by domestic and regional circumstances to the Shi'ites' own collective understanding of Islamic themes and principles, Hizbullah is able to assert its role as protector of the Shi'ite and to use religion to persuade and convince the community of the importance of its support.

6.7.3 Divine victory

Given the culture of resistance promoted by Hizbullah, "divine victory" emerged as a prominent theme in the content analysis of Nasrallah's speeches from 2000 to 2013. As revealed in Chart 5, Nasrallah referred to the notion of divine victory in all of his speeches during this period, excepting 2005. The references were particularly evident during his speeches in 2000 (21.43%). This is most likely due to the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May, 2000. Chart 5 shows Nasrallah's allusions to religious victory were also somewhat more pronounced during his speeches in 2006 (5.33%), coinciding with the July War against Israel, 2007 (3.88%), corresponding with the growing role of Hizbullah in the Lebanese government and in 2013 (3.57%), which coincided with the Party's military achievements in the fight against ISIS (and other Syrian opposition groups) in Syria. The high number of references to victory in 2000 is due to the Party's achievement with the withdrawal of the Israeli army. On the other hand, the Party's reference to victory dropped from the years 2007 (3.88%) to 2013 (3.57%) which indicates the Party's emphasis on justifying its policies not with a victorious rhetoric, but a participatory one. After all, the Party's inability

to emphasise a victory narrative against ISIS in 2013 stems from the fact that the conflict was still unfolding and the Party was putting more efforts on recruitment and mobilisation.

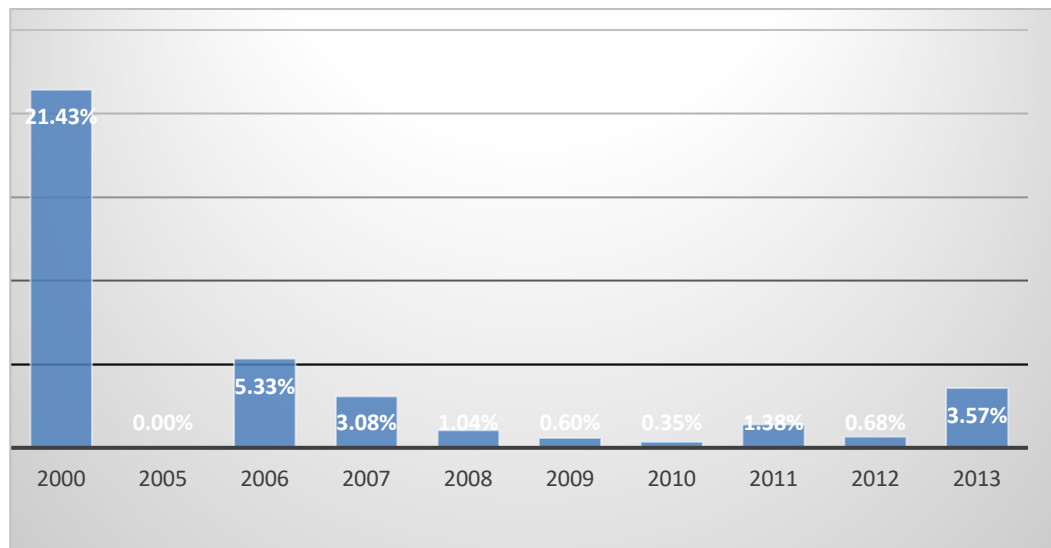


Chart 5 Nasrallah's use of the 'divine victory' theme in his speeches by year (2000-2013)

In terms of the communication medium used by Nasrallah to appeal to his followers' "need" for victory, Chart 6 shows that the Hizbullah leader included this rhetoric in the majority of his public speeches (56%) from 2000 to 2013, as well as during his appearances on *Al Manar* TV (11%) over the same period.

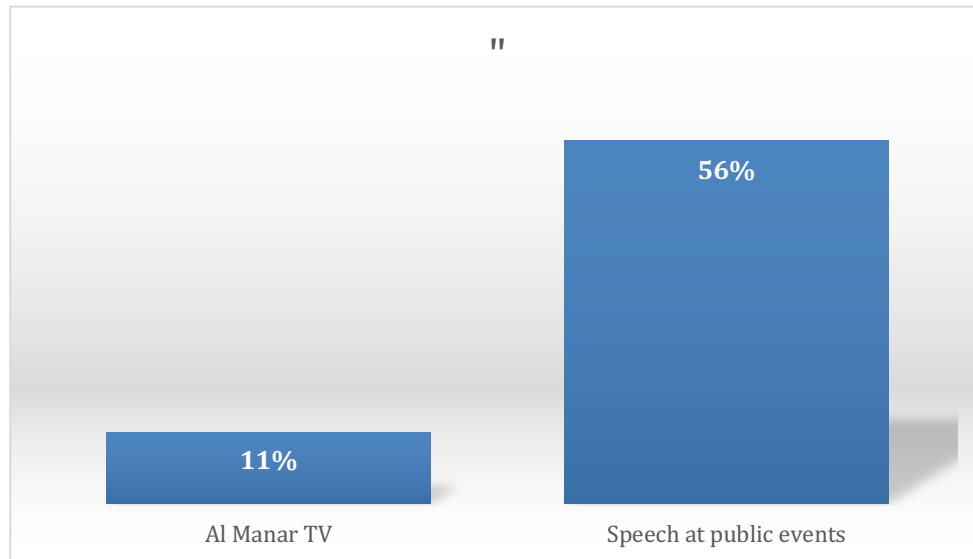


Chart 6 Nasrallah's use of 'victory' theme in his speeches by main communication medium (2000-2013)

Nasrallah's references to divine victory at public events particularly and on television occasionally suggests his belief in the importance of connecting with his audience when promising them victory or to remind them of why and what they are fighting for.

Furthermore, during the July War 2006, Nasrallah understood his audience's "need" for victory and promised his followers as much when he stated in his speech:

Oh brothers and sisters, from all religions, sects, movements and parties, you are indeed victorious ... as I said to you in the invitation, as I used to always promise you victory, I promise victory again ... them ... they are continuing the July-August war, and we continue our battle of defending Lebanon's identity, unity and integrity. Long live all of you, blessed be the martyr Ahmed Mahmoud, blessed be your martyrs and long live Lebanon.⁶⁹

Thus, Nasrallah combines religious and political language to emphasise his status as a religious and political leader, declaring the end of the July War (2006) as both a divine victory that only Hizbullah could have achieved and a political

⁶⁹ Alahednews (2006) Sayyed Nasrallah Speech on the Divine Victory Rally in Beirut on 22-09-2006, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=709&cid=447#.WW6wG4V8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).
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victory for all Lebanese (Zisser 2009). Thus, as Khatib (2013) concluded, Hizbullah's resistance rhetoric served not only to remind its supporters of the armed struggle against Israel, but also to provide its supporters with an inclusive and religiously endorsed discourse that provided a point of political difference.

Nasrallah also demonstrates his oratory skills to use religious rhetoric to convey political and strategic messages that combine religion and resistance across a wide range of contexts. Indeed, the circumstances in Lebanon and the region, most notably the war of 2006 and the clashes of 2008, provided the contextual framework for Nasrallah to adapt the messaging in his speeches to changing audience demands. As such, his speeches throughout 2006 included several statements about divine victory and martyrdom for example; whereas his speeches after 2007 included more references to pragmatism and openness.

6.7.4 Use of language of fear and threat

To affirm the Shi'ites' journey on the path of resistance, and to present Hizbullah as a protector of the oppressed Shi'ites, Nasrallah stated in 2002:

[...] we should commit ourselves to the path on which we have indeed offered many martyrs and sacrifices, but have found at the end of it only victory's self-esteem, and dignity for ourselves, our people, the motherland, our citizens, our nation, and for every oppressed and suffering human being.⁷⁰

This demonstrates the language of fear and threat Nasrallah uses to project his role as guardian and Hizbullah's role as the only group to stand up against global and regional threats. This was demonstrated in Nasrallah's statement after the July War in 2006; "We feel that we won and that Lebanon won, that Palestinians triumphed and so has the Arab nation as a whole, that all the vulnerable, oppressed, deprived and victims in this world have triumphed."⁷¹

⁷⁰ Alahednews (2002) Sayyed Nasrallah: Hizbullah's Secretary General: We will fight to the death anyone who thinks about disarming the resistance by force, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=687&cid=437#.WXsTMYV8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

⁷¹ Alahednews (2006) Sayyed Nasrallah Speech on the Divine Victory Rally in Beirut on 22-09-2006, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=709&cid=447#.WW6wG4V8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

Specifically, Chart 7 presents the results regarding Nasrallah's use of the language of fear and threat in his speeches. What emerged from the analysis is that Nasrallah used this language overwhelmingly (25% of occasions) when talking about the "sit-ins".⁷² The other occasions where the language of fear and threat was most prominent in Nasrallah's speeches included when he was talking at graduation celebrations (7%) and about Islamic (non-Shi'ite) festivity (5%).

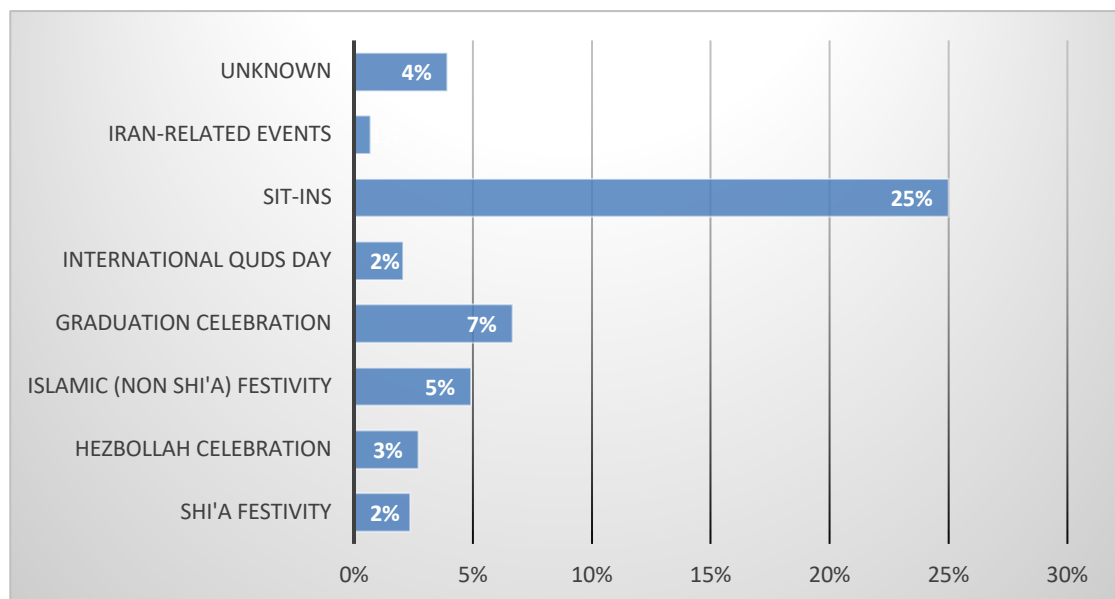


Chart 7: Nasrallah's use of the language of fear and threat in his speeches by type of event (2000-2013)

Thus, Hizbullah's collective identification of Shi'ites as a victimised group combined with Nasrallah's uses of the language of fear and threat demonstrate

⁷² The "sit-ins" took place in 2008 in Beirut when hundreds of thousands of Hizbullah supporters streamed into the capital city and laid siege the Prime Minister, Fouad Siniora's office for four days. The protesters threatened to escalate their campaign of civil disobedience until they brought about the collapse of the US-backed government.

the Party's use of religious rhetoric to serve its political agenda. For instance, in a specific reminder to his audience of their status as a target of American and Israeli threats, Nasrallah claimed in 2005; "They will be able to see the future through Muslim eyes and not through the eyes of an America that only seeks our defeat"⁷³. Also, in 2006, Nasrallah asserted, "we have to remain calm and absorb the shock, their objective is clear for all to see. It is to sow pure sedition of which the primary beneficiary in Iraq is the American administration, which still pursues its policy of imposing total control over Iraq's oil, potential and resources".⁷⁴ Nasrallah continued with this line of argument in 2006, but in a different tone; "I do not accuse all those in March 14, or the entire team in power. I do not accuse all its personalities. I did not mention names to anyone, nor to any American or non-American journalists; but those who sat with the Americans and asked do them to wage war on Lebanon know themselves!"⁷⁵

Nasrallah also referred in his speeches to the marginalisation of Lebanese Shi'ites to reinforce the Party's role as the only source of support for the Shi'ite community. In a speech in 2006, Nasrallah emphasised that "in the past, it was the Shi'a areas that were [one of the] deprived [communities in Lebanon]. Now it is not only the Shi'a areas [that are deprived]".⁷⁶ "Either we are required to die, die by being killed or die of hunger, or die as a result of illness or to be ignorant and hold jobs as shoe-shiners."⁷⁷ In this speech, Nasrallah reminds the Lebanese Shi'ites of their inferior status in Lebanon and their unhappy destiny as a group. In this way, Nasrallah successfully builds significant political support for Hizbullah among most members of the Shi'ite community.

⁷³ Alahednews (2005) Sayyed Nasrallah: Hizbullah wants to keep the region war-free, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=673&cid=437#.WW6wwIV8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

⁷⁴ Alahednews (2006) Nasrallah: We will be asking in talks 'how do we protect Lebanon?', available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=695&cid=438#.WW6xKYV8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

⁷⁵ Alahednews (2006) Hizbullah SG Speech on 30-11-2006 <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=715&cid=447#.WW6xhYV8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014)

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ <http://www.mogawama.org/essaydetails.php?eid=2121&cid=142> (Accessed 30th July, 2014).

6.8 The Oppressed Versus the Oppressor

The language of marginalisation and threat in Hizbullah's characterisation of Shi'ites points to Nasrallah's use of the "oppressed versus oppressor" theme in his language. In turn, the content analysis of his speeches from 2000 to 2013 revealed a variable but omnipresent use of the political and religious language of the oppressed versus the oppressor. As indicated in Chart 8, the use of "oppressed vs. oppressor" rhetoric was especially prominent in 2011 (14.88% of the speech content), 2000 (14.29% of the speech content), and 2010 (11.17% of the speech content). The interpretation of this consistent theme usage is tied to the oppression of Shi'ite communities across the Middle East by external forces. This rhetoric allows for the marginalised Shi'ite community to identify with the notion of being oppressed, which has been a recurrent theme since the emergence of the sect during the Battle of Karbala in the year 680. Most the Shi'ite communities replay the scenes of oppression, signified by *Ashoura* and the commemoration of the death of Hussein, son of Ali, and typically wear black during this period and refrain from joyful celebrations.

Shi'ites are keen to replay the massacre of Hussein, his companions and family members. Themes of sorrow and sadness commonly emerge during the time of *Ashoura* and are actually encouraged. Mourning the death of Hussein commenced immediately after the Battle of Karbala by his surviving relatives and supporters and continues until today. On an annual basis, Hizbullah televises a grand-scale *Ashoura* event that includes a march on the streets of Beirut. By revisiting the themes of Shi'ite oppression and wrongful massacres, leaders of the sect such as Nasrallah can bring people together in support of a common identity. The use of "oppressed vs. oppressor" stems from this incident, to rally support to revolt against any kind of oppression.

Again, Nasrallah ties his speech content to local, regional and international politics. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn, that the heightened use of the theme of "oppressed vs. oppressor" in 2010 and 2011 is tied to the "Arab Spring" uprisings where Nasrallah tried to present himself and his Party as supporters of the revolution, and opponents to any form of oppression. In the case of May,

2000, this theme was tied to the withdrawal of the Israeli army (the oppressors) from Southern Lebanon (the oppressed). The Israeli army had meddled forcefully in Southern Lebanon, occupying different villages, since 1985. Therefore, the withdrawal of the forces was highly celebrated and catapulted Hizbullah's efforts into the spotlight, gaining them support from many in the local community and across the region. This day is marked on May 25 and celebrated every year as "Liberation Day". It is commemorated via a televised speech by Nasrallah which plays on the "oppressed vs. oppressor" theme by reminding the Party's supporters and the general public of the efforts by Hizbullah to liberate the country.

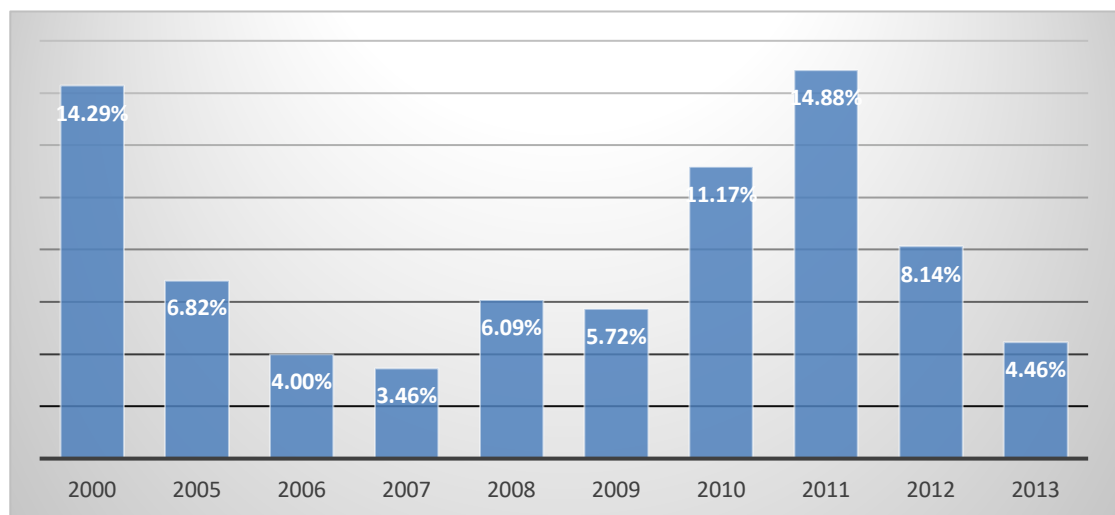


Chart 8: Nasrallah's use of the "oppressed vs. oppressors" theme in his speeches by year (2000-2013)

The meaning of this rhetoric reflects language that Shi'ites can easily relate to. The language used was clearly intended to speak to Lebanese Shi'ites as it spoke about their struggle – namely a community denied political, social and economic standing by the Lebanese state, and a group that had been subjected to repeated Israeli attacks (Khatib et al. 2014: 51). For example, an article in *Al-Ahd* magazine describes the lack of "[...] sanitary care. The recent events (after fighting in the

south) caused diseases such as chest infections and measles" (2014: 51). In this, there is a clear reference to the failure of the Lebanese state and justification for Hizbullah and its resistance agenda.

Hizbullah's ability to present itself as a protector relies on a combination of Islamic and nationalist platforms that ultimately contribute to the perceptions of the Party's complex and ambiguous agenda (Harik 2004). Although Shi'ite Islam has a core position in the internal structure and hierarchy of Hizbullah, the nationalistic platform of the Party is evidenced in its primary objective to defend Lebanon against Israel and to provide relief and social justice to the Shi'ite Muslim population (Alagha 2012: 12-16). As such, the complexity and ambiguity of the Party's identity emerges from the sympathy and support for its cause to secure Lebanon's borders. Nasrallah's affirmation of Hizbullah's duty to protect Lebanon as the homeland and Shi'ites as the oppressed are reflected in his statements in 2006:

[...] with the exception of the issue of Shebaa farms, which is a special one, and in connection with the recent war, we will consider it our right to fight Israel in any position it occupies. As for when and how to fight it, this is up to the resistance command.⁷⁸

In a speech on *Al-Quds* day in 2008, Nasrallah proclaimed, "this experience of the resistance, which must be transferred to the world, relies on faith, conviction, trust, and the moral and spiritual willingness to [sacrifice ourselves]".⁷⁹ However, the question remains as to how much Hizbullah is willing to let the Lebanese state be involved in the Shi'ite areas. While Nasrallah claims at one point in his speech; "we want the government to assume its responsibility at this stage. Is it not the government that says it is the one which wants to protect its citizens?", he continues to then assert; "As for when and how to fight it, this is up

⁷⁸ Alahednews (2006) Nasrallah: We will be asking in talks 'how do we protect Lebanon?', available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=695&cid=438#.WW6xKYV8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

⁷⁹ Alahednews (2008) Sayyed Nasrallah on al-Quds Day: We must arm our army, even through black market, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=5200&cid=449#.WW6yI4V8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

to the resistance command". Also, in 2007 Nasrallah proclaimed, "we are the protectors of the nation".⁸⁰

Nasrallah continues his demand for the Lebanese state to take responsibility for the domestic affairs when saying:

They say: oh you are having a state within a state. Well, make me understand. You are the state, you don't want to liberate the land, you don't want to free the prisoners, you don't want to protect us from being killed or assassinated, or protect us from landings, you don't want to cure us, you don't want to feed us and you don't want to teach us.⁸¹

Therefore, the fusion of religion and politics in Nasrallah's rhetoric serves a pragmatic purpose to undermine state authority by exposing its inability to perform its sovereign duty and in doing so, secure more support for Hizbullah. To clarify, Nasrallah's primary intent in his rhetoric is to mobilise the support of Lebanon's Shi'ites by persistently pointing to the Lebanese government's failure, along with the failure of leftist parties, to secure and protect the rights of the poor (Deeb 2006: 79). This demonstrates political pragmatism in that he does this knowing that weak states are a result of alternative growing powers, which is the status of the post-war system in Lebanon. This was also evident in Hizbullah's autonomy by building its separate institutional network (see Chapter One). However, the Shi'ite community in Lebanon is not the only group given focus by Hizbullah when speaking on the threat of oppression and marginalisation. The following section reveals how Nasrallah implies that Hizbullah itself is also subject to the same "threats" through attempts to disarm the Party.

6.8.1 Demands for Hizbullah to disarm

Hizbullah has unquestionably evolved as a Party since Nasrallah's appointment as the Party leader. In terms of weaponry, Hizbullah has steadily increased its arsenal to include more than a thousand 122 mm Katyusha rockets, rocket propelled grenades, AT-4 antitank missiles, and mortars and antiaircraft

⁸⁰ Alahednews (2007) Sayyed Nasrallah speech at Rayah Stadium on Divine Victory Festival, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=742&cid=448#.WW6x-oV8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

⁸¹ Alahednews (2007) Sayyed Nasrallah speech at Rayah Stadium on Divine Victory Festival, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=742&cid=448#.WW6x-oV8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

batteries. As a result, it emerged as one of the most well-armed non-state actors in the world (Alagha 2012). Thus, Nasrallah has overseen a significant strengthening in the Party's standing as a resistance/political movement.

In turn, Nasrallah's speeches demonstrate how he seizes upon the continuous domestic and international demands to disarm Hizbullah, the resistance movement, within the notions of religious martyrdom. In a speech made in 2005 for example, Nasrallah confirmed; "[...] but if anyone, listen to me, if anyone tries to disarm the resistance, we will fight him the way martyrs fought in Karbala [...]"

Moreover, in his speeches he alludes to the perceived conspiracy against Hizbullah by asserting that "Hizbullah, Lebanon and the Palestinians in Palestine are forbidden to have modest weapons to defend themselves, their country and their homeland".⁸² He continues; "I tell you frankly that the international community does not seek to further the interests of the Palestinians, Lebanese, Arabs or this entire region. Rather it is doing its utmost to advance the interests of the United States and Israel".⁸³ In 2006, Nasrallah then affirmed that "the decision [Israel war against Lebanon] was to crush Hizbullah".⁸⁴

One finds a change in Nasrallah's tone when making statements about Hizbullah's weapons in 2007. Nasrallah's rhetorical change shows his willingness to adapt to changing circumstances in that his discourse responds to present-day circumstances with powerful historical and religious allusions without revealing the Party's full intentions. However, this has left Hizbullah's

⁸² Alahednews (2008) Sayyed Nasrallah on al-Quds Day: We must arm our army, even through black market, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=5200&cid=449#.WW6yI4V8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

⁸³ Alahednews (2008) Sayyed Nasrallah on al-Quds Day: We must arm our army, even through black market, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=5200&cid=449#.WW6yI4V8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

⁸⁴ Alahednews (2006) Hizbullah SG Speech on 30-11-2006 <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=715&cid=447#.WW6xhYV8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014)

rivals and enemies “guessing” as to the next step to be made by the Party (Matar cited in Khatib et al. 2014: 169).

Illustrations of Hizbullah’s “ideological ambiguity” (Harik 2004) are also found in some of Nasrallah’s statements on weapons following the July War in 2006, and the May 2008 clashes. Nasrallah framed these topics as a necessity to protect and secure *moqawama*. As discussed in Chapter Four in relation to Nasrallah and his uses of *ijtihad* reasoning, Nasrallah reasoned that Hizbullah must keep its weapons to support its objective to strengthen Lebanon and to protect the Lebanese people. Insisting that Hizbullah would not use its arms against other Lebanese factions, Nasrallah argued that only when the Party’s objective was realised would it negotiate on an outcome regarding its weapons.

In addition, Nasrallah made reference to the July War in 2006 to again argue that Hizbullah was a resistance movement – rather than a militia – that required weaponry as part of its defensive strategy. In turn, he reasoned that when such a defensive mindset was no longer needed, then the Party would consider relinquishing its weapons. Lastly, Nasrallah also referred to the May 2008 clashes to position Hizbullah as the victim of unfair decisions by the government and therefore the Party needed weapons capabilities to defend itself.

Hence, Hizbullah situated the threats from within Lebanon and abroad on the same scale to mobilize great support from Lebanese Shi’ites in return. Alternatively, Nasrallah is justifying his actions under the “principle of lesser evil” (Coughlin 2010). Nasrallah’s rhetoric constantly attempts to draw attention to the Party’s adaptation to socio-historical occasions while maintaining ideological ambiguity. For instance, at one point he opens the door for debates on Hizbullah’s weapons while at the same time leaving Hizbullah’s rivals and enemies guessing as to what its next steps will be.

As previously mentioned, central to the culture of resistance promoted by Hizbullah is the doctrine of *jihad*. The following sections present descriptive and quantitative results from the content and context analysis of Nasrallah’s speeches to demonstrate an emphasis placed on community building, education and

addressing the role of women in society. The selection of these specific aspects for analysis was informed by the direction undertaken by the Party at this time to promote an image of progressiveness. The following discussion of the analysis results helps to illustrate Hizbullah's political pragmatism by further emphasising its important role and position in Lebanese society. In turn, this reinforces the Party's message that it is more than just a conventional Islamic party by being adaptable and by "opening-up" (Al-Agha 2011) to the people.

6.9 Doctrine of *Jihad*

To maintain the support of Lebanese Shi'ites, Hizbullah sought to formulate a religious-historical narrative of Shi'ism as a social, cultural and political force; a notion which was first employed by Imam Musa al-Sadr in the late 1970s. This formulation served as the basis of individual empowerment and for creating an imagined community of Shi'ite resistance in Lebanon (Khatib et al. 2014: 52). As a result, the participation of Lebanese Shi'ites in the development of state and society, and in the resistance against Israel, becomes a collective religious and civic duty. This was not only reflected in Hizbullah's media strategy, but also through religious and symbolic practices (Khatib et al 2014; Deeb 2006).

6.9.1 Community development

In an attempt to enhance the Shi'ite identity, Hizbullah sought to strengthen the institutional network it created. Hence, Nasrallah made an important correlation between community-building and *jihad* in numerous speeches. For Nasrallah, *jihad* does not only cover fighting the enemy (otherwise known as lesser *jihad*). Rather, Nasrallah's reference goes to the principle of higher *jihad*, which manifests itself in the purity of the soul and in doing good deeds.

This is reflected in the content analysis of Nasrallah's speeches, with Chart 9, showing that Nasrallah included numerous references to community development when speaking at graduation celebrations (22% of the time). Similarly, although to a much lesser degree, he would also refer to community development when speaking at Hizbullah celebrations (5% of the time).

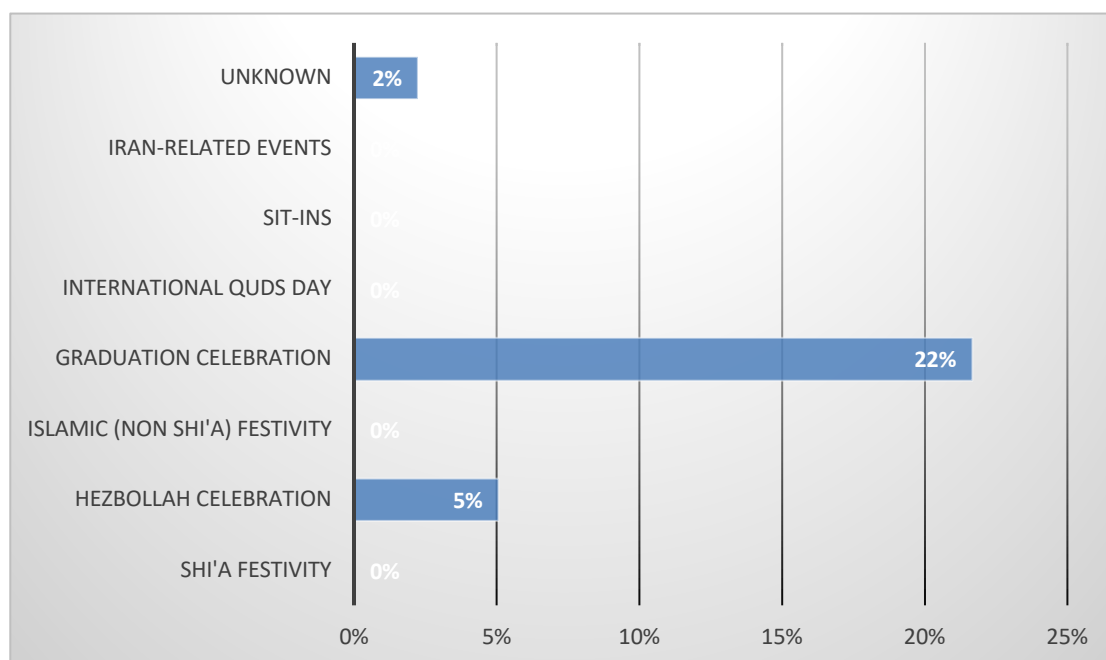


Chart 9: Nasrallah's references to community development in his speeches by event (2000-2013)

Nasrallah promotes the concept of higher *jihad* to strengthen the Shi'ite community and therefore develop and improve their social situation (communal *jihad*). This was highlighted by Deeb (2006: 50-66) who noted the importance of volunteerism for pious women in Dahye. As one volunteer stated, religion can be considered from two positions, the person's relationship with God and the person's relationship with God in the context of society. Regarding the second position, the notion of one's obligation to worship is given consideration in relation to the way in which the acts of worship serve others in society.

Indeed, worship that does not benefit society is addressed in the *Qur'an*; namely through *Fa-waylu lil-musallin alladhinahum 'an salatihim sahun* in reference to worshippers who are not interested in their prayers; *alladhinahum yur'aun* in reference to those who worship just to be seen to be doing so by others; and *wa yamnau'n al-ma'un* in reference to those who prevent others from achieving happiness. Of course, the *Qur'an* endorses worship that combines prayers and service to others to support the collective benefit to all.

Another aspect of the doctrine of *jihad* promoted by Nasrallah in his speeches relates to the importance of support for, or sponsorship of, the children of martyrs. Nasrallah frames this responsibility within Islamic discourse through references to a *Hadith*; “*ana wa kafil al-yatim fi-l-janna*- I (the prophet) and the orphan’s sponsor will be in heaven” (Deeb 2006: 197). Nasrallah reiterated this responsibility in his statement in 2008; “these children are our responsibility”. Nasrallah uses the concept of *jihad* in a politically pragmatic way; namely, to bolster political support for the Party, by aligning the Party’s existence to an ongoing responsibility to support the children of martyrs. Asserting the Party’s responsibility to serve the community has thus assisted Hizbullah to consolidate religious concepts in its political discourse.

6.9.2 Education

Education also emerges as a focal point in Nasrallah’s speeches in his attempts to establish links between Hizbullah and the doctrine of *jihad*. As such, the content analysis of his speeches focused on the extent to which he referred to education to appeal to the needs of his audience. The results presented in Chart 10 reveal Nasrallah was relatively consistent in his references to education, with 2010, 2012, and 2007 recording the highest percentages of references at 4.19%, 4.07%, and 3.85% respectively⁸⁵. In contrast, there were no references to education in his speeches during the years 2005, 2006, and 2008. To account for these differences, the focus of local and regional politics at different times required different key messaging. In 2005 for example, the assassination of the Former Prime Minister of Lebanon was making headlines and therefore, education was not at the forefront. 2006 marked the Israeli war with Lebanon, again the focus was on defending Lebanon, Hizbullah emerging as the “victor” of this war and the rebuilding of the damaged, war torn areas across Lebanon as a result of the war (with a full-fledged, properly designed and communicated campaign entitled “Samidoon”, which means “we will stand strong and remain” in Arabic) (Khatib 2013). In 2008 as well, the focus of speeches related to the talks

⁸⁵ It is important to consider that even though “Education” theme was recorded only between 3-4% of Nasrallah’s speeches, it is aimed to show this theme, as it comprises one of the Party’s social policies. Analysis of Nasrallah’s Speeches 2001-2013

on the disarmament of Hizbullah and resulted in the clashes on the streets of Beirut. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that Nasrallah and his team of advisors take into account local, regional and international politics and ensure that speeches are timely and can be contextualized and quoted when needed. Also, through his speeches, Nasrallah seeks to gain support and take a stance on local and regional issues where applicable. He uses his speeches as a tool to rally support, recruit new fighters or influence the minds of his supporters in a way that is tied to local and regional happenings.

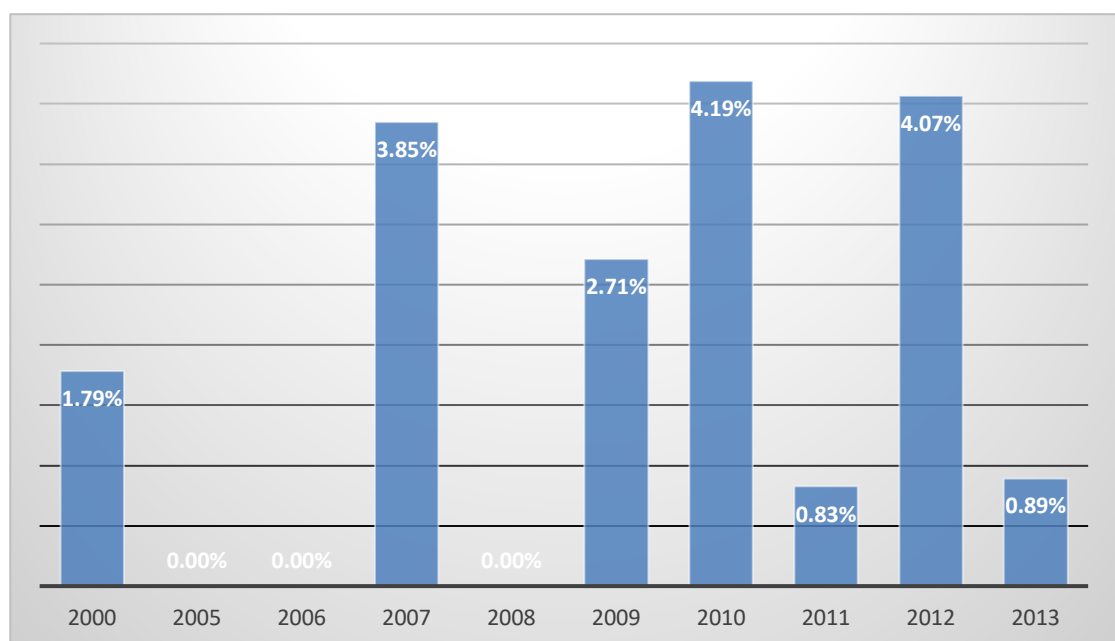


Chart 10: Nasrallah's references to the importance of education in his speeches by year (2000-2013)

6.9.3 Role of women role in society

Women's role in society is another important social consideration addressed by Nasrallah in his speeches that allude to the doctrine of *jihad*. For instance, Nasrallah explained the importance of women's role in society in a speech in 2008 when he stated:

It was with this Hussaini, Karabalan logic, you rejected humiliation and shame, and insisted on continuing the confrontation and resistance through education, despite the destruction of tens of thousands of your

homes, and the fall of thousands of martyrs and the wounded men, women and children, with few supporters by your side, abandoned by those close to you, and the collusion of those far from you.⁸⁶

Similar to the content analysis results for community development, Chart 14 shows that Nasrallah sought in his speeches to establish a relationship between religious rhetoric and women's role in society at graduation celebrations 10.00% of the time and Hizbullah celebrations 3.71% of the time.

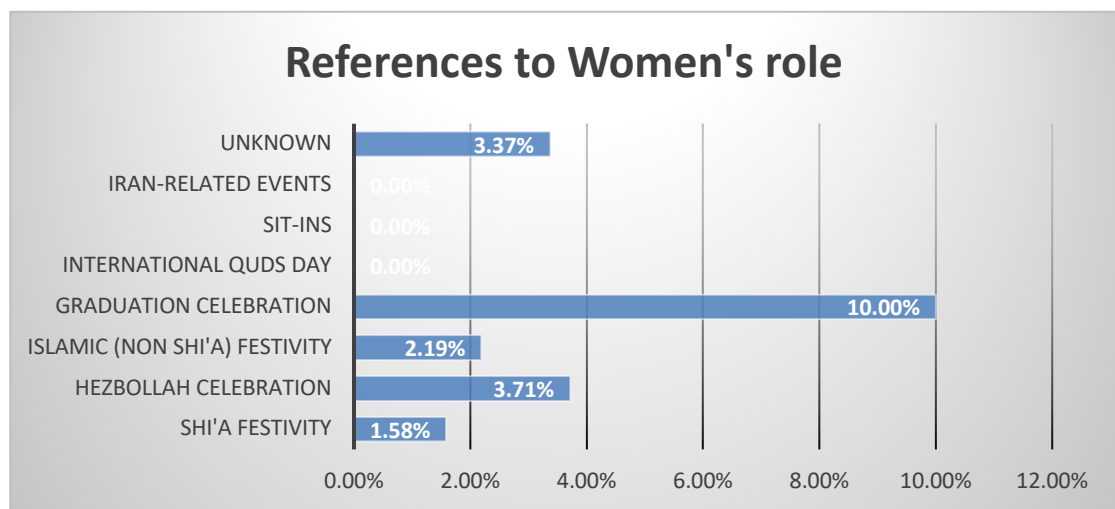


Chart 11: Nasrallah's references to the role of women in society in his speeches by year (2000-2013).

The following sections explore how Nasrallah's speeches address Hizbullah's "position" in domestic politics. Descriptive and quantitative data results are provided in relation to such themes as pragmatism and quietism, Hizbullah as the party for all Lebanese, and its links to *Welayet al-Faqih*.

6.10 Hizbullah and Domestic Politics

A key theme to emerge in Nasrallah's speeches is his dismissal of accusations against Hizbullah that its primary objective is the pursuit of political power. Nasrallah explained in 2007:

⁸⁶ Alahednews (2008) Sayyed Nasrallah on al-Quds Day: We must arm our army, even through black market, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=5200&cid=449#.WW6yI4V8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).
Analysis of Nasrallah's Speeches 2001-2013

I mean must I every day and in every speech re-iterate, as we constantly do, that we stand for co-existence, civil peace, the Taif Agreement, the unity of the Lebanese and that we have no hidden Goals or ulterior motives, that we do not want to take control of the government.⁸⁷

Nasrallah then indicates the Party's objective to participate in the political process by stating:

We had employed political and civil means, which is why we were participating in the political process. Today, we will continue the political struggle in order to achieve a state of law and institutions, in order to achieve a government that considers all the Lebanese as equals, that defends and preserves their security.⁸⁸

In this, the issue of Hizbullah's transparency as a political party arises. When Hizbullah undermines state authority it reinforces its position as the only protector and representative of Lebanese Shi'ites. By this, Hizbullah can guarantee its status within the community and make decisions for it collectively (as will be shown in the Party's participation in the Syrian conflict). The battle for this position is fought through the use of *Ashoura*, as an example of Shi'ite historical and religious quest for survival and insecurity.

Hizbullah presents itself as a political and religious group capable of integrating into the Lebanese political system while retaining its religious identity. This is evident in the high-level visibility of religion in its area of control (Deeb 2006) and its communication strategy or branding (Khatib 2013). However, the Party had to undergo an *infatih* (opening up) policy⁸⁹ to protect its position in the post-*Tai'f* political changes which depended on a re-interpretation of the doctrine of *Welayat al-Faqih* (see Chapters One and Two).

⁸⁷ Alahednews (2007) Sayyed Nasrallah speech at Rayah Stadium on Divine Victory Festival, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=742&cid=448#.WW6x-oV8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

⁸⁸ Alahednews (2007) Sayyed Nasrallah speech at Rayah Stadium on Divine Victory Festival, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=742&cid=448#.WW6x-oV8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

⁸⁹ The *infatih* policy undertaken by Hizbullah started with the approval of the Iranian Supreme Leader for the Party to join the Lebanese parliamentary elections in 1992 (see Chapter One). In this action Hizbullah showed its readiness to integrate into Lebanese politics and to accept the Lebanese confessional system. In another attempt at *infatih*, Hizbullah sought alliances in the legislative and municipal elections with "ideological enemies, like any political party, that accommodated its protest by negotiations and bargaining with a wide spectrum of groups across the Lebanese myriad" (Al-Agha 2011: 55-59). Analysis of Nasrallah's Speeches 2001-2013

One of the themes in Nasrallah's speeches reflecting Hizbullah's agenda to build political support in Lebanon is "pragmatism based on quietism". The content analysis of Nasrallah's speeches between 2000 and 2013 also revealed that "pragmatism based on quietism" was a religious theme he referred to from 2008 to 2010 particularly. To clarify, the religiosity of the "quietism" theme to Shi'ites is to be understood in relation to *taqiyya*; that is, the denial of one's religious beliefs and practices when subjected to persecution (as discussed in Chapters Three and Four) (Black 2015: 230-233). The pragmatic aspect of the quietism position of the Party is then evident in the goal to assert religious grounds for the withdrawal from the political arena and thus not be perceived to be deliberately undermining the government.

As shown in Chart 12 this theme accounted for 2.09% of the content of his speeches during 2008, and that he continued to make references to this religious idea during 2009 (0.15%) and 2010 (0.70%). It is interesting to note that Nasrallah made no references to the notion of pragmatism based on quietism from 2000 to 2007 or from 2011 to 2013. As Nasrallah seeks to focus on immediate matters and crafts his speeches based on timely local, regional and international events, the events taken place in those years needs to be assessed.

Therefore, the years in which the "pragmatism based on quietism" approach was not used by the Party were problematic. The other events taking place required the Party's full strategic focus on the ground or were not led by the Party. In 2000, the Party was working to liberate Lebanon from Israeli occupation, which it achieved on 25 May, 2000. The messaging released by Hizbullah and its leader in this year and during the years that immediately followed were about winning the war using whatever strategic tactics was being deployed. The facts were clearly stated and the Party's efforts in winning back Lebanon's sovereignty were widely celebrated. In addition, following the assassination of former Prime Minister, Hariri, the Party had to take a firm stance against all that was taking place to clear its name from being tied to the assassination (Khatib 2013). A straight-forward reporting approach based on facts had also been used in recent years, pertaining to Hizbullah's role in the Syrian war. This factual approach was

used to update the local, regional and international public on events on ground as the details remained somewhat hard to access for those who were not directly participating.

However, when compared to 2008, 2009 and 2010, there is a spike in the use of the “pragmatism based on quietism” approach. The Party was under a lot of scrutiny from various external forces and political parties and calls for its disarmament were ever present. In addition, Hizbullah’s image was under great scrutiny following the clashes on the streets of Beirut in 2008, and the Party was seen as an “internal enemy” by a growing number of people (Saade 2015). Therefore, Nasrallah chose to relay the facts as they appeared, but chose not to challenge them, so as not to engage in needless banter. When the Party met with severe repercussions due to its actions and reputation, Nasrallah’s approach was not to fight back, but rather to affirm that the Party’s actions were channelled towards the greater good of Lebanese society, as a protector no less.

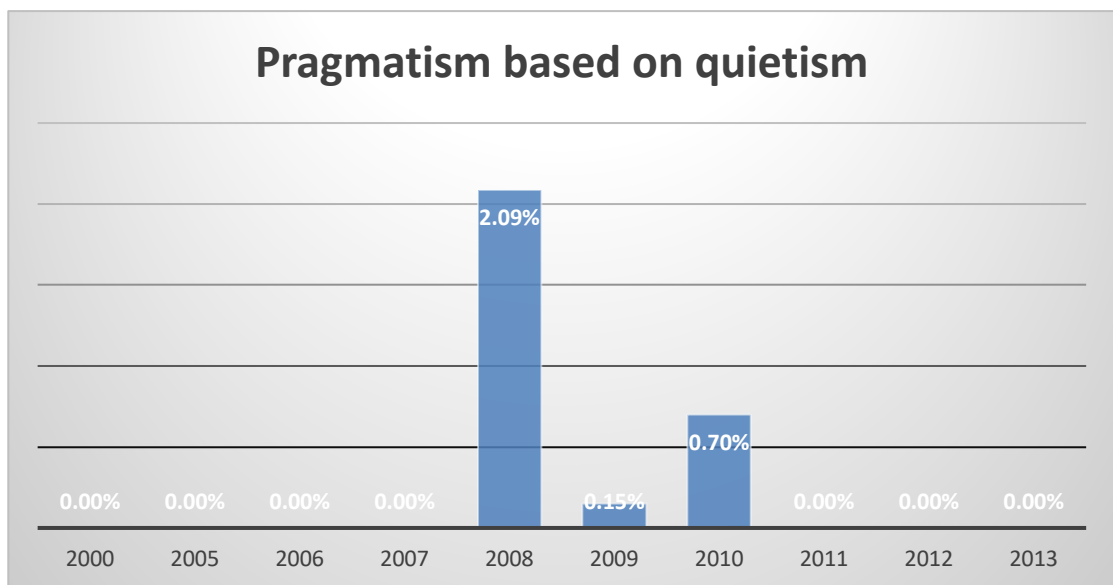


Chart 12: Nasrallah’s references in his speeches to pragmatism based on quietism by year (2000-2013)

6.10.1 Lebanese parliamentary elections in 1992

Unlike former Party leaders such as Sheikh Sobhi Tufaili⁹⁰, regarded by many as a hardliner, Nasrallah wants to project the image that he presides over a more pragmatic Party – with Lebanese national interests as its main concern. This is evident in his approach when negotiating on whether Hizbullah should participate in the Lebanese parliamentary elections in 1992. Tufaili, for instance, opposed the suggestion on the premise that it would weaken the Party and divert it from its primary objective to provide resistance to Israel. Tufaili also believed that the Lebanese political system was corrupt. Nasrallah on the other hand, along with his predecessor, *Sayyid* Abbas Moussawi, voiced their support for Hizbullah's participation in the 1992 Lebanese parliamentary elections, arguing that it would secure the Party's position in Lebanon and thus secure Hizbullah's political future. Of greater interest to Nasrallah was that the election campaigns would present him with the opportunity to communicate his political agenda to the Lebanese people.

This is an important consideration given Hizbullah has struggled to establish widespread support in Lebanon. This has been due to several factors including the Party's ambiguous policies, its insistence on remaining armed, and its stated objectives. In addition, the clannish nature of the Lebanese political system means that it is difficult for the Party to make inroads into the Christian population of the country. Perhaps too, the central and almost omnipotent role played by Nasrallah in Hizbullah's political processes has alienated other supporter groups.

Nasrallah emphasised the importance of the Party's alliances with AMAL and the FPM in statements in 2008 and 2009. Specifically, he declared that a common understanding can be established with Christian leaders from different regions. Notably, Nasrallah was determined to emphasise that the new understanding between Hizbullah and the FPM was not intended to be at the expense of Hizbullah's willingness to work with other sects, religions, or political forces. As

⁹⁰ Tufaili would later represent one of the prominent Shi'ite clerics who opposed Hizbullah's monopolisation of the resistance and for its policy towards the Lebanese Shi'ite community. Analysis of Nasrallah's Speeches 2001-2013

he explained, the new understanding with the FPM was signed when they were all Ministers in PM al-Saniora's Cabinet, and the alliance was a step towards the real goal to build stronger connections between all groups and segments of Lebanese society. Moreover, Nasrallah argued that Hizbullah and Amal enjoyed a brother-like bond based on reason and cooperation that could not be broken by others. As such, the bond relied on mutual and deep trust between the two parties that rose above politics and political interests.⁹¹

The agreement signed between Hizbullah and the FPM appears to have provided Nasrallah with the context to reinforce the notion of religious pragmatism in his speeches. This is evidenced in a speech given in 2008 when Nasrallah commented:

On your behalf, I take this occasion to congratulate all Muslims and Christians, on their grand, cherished and glorious holidays that are associated and connected to two great figures, of the greatest of God Almighty's prophets, Jesus, God's Spirit and word... and the supreme Messenger of all the prophets and messengers of God, Mohammed Bin Abdullah peace and prayers of the Lord be upon them both and upon all God's prophets and messengers. Each one of these two grand figures transformed from a man into a nation exceeding a billion and hundreds of millions when talking about either Muslims or Christians.⁹²

This was done to ensure that Hizbullah was regarded as a national Party and not simply a Shi'ite group; namely, a national Lebanese party seeking to represent all of society.

These steps can be characterised through a pragmatic notion of Islamic jurisprudence – *ijtihad* – that provides Hizbullah with flexibility in terms of its political behaviour (Khatib 2014: 27). Hizbullah adheres to the two principles: “necessity permits what is prohibited” and “what cannot be accomplished in its

⁹¹ Alahednews (2008) Sayyed Nasrallah on al-Quds Day: We must arm our army, even through black market, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=5200&cid=449#.WW6yI4V8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

⁹² Alahednews (2008) Sayyed Nasrallah on al-Quds Day: We must arm our army, even through black market, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=5200&cid=449#.WW6yI4V8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

whole ... should not be left abandoned in its whole" (Khatib 2014: 27). Hizbullah also relies on the following principles of *Shari'a* (Al-Agha 2011: 165):

- The protection of reason
- The protection of the self
- The protection of family and descent
- The protection of religion
- The protection of property

Furthermore, Hizbullah embraces its own realpolitik, arguing that while realpolitik refers to "choosing practicality over ideology in the pursuit of power, Hizbullah has managed to find a balance between the two" (Khatib 2014: 27). Qassem supports this claim by stating that "the dominance of interest over principles is unacceptable but considering interest to be in the framework of maintaining principles is acceptable" (2005: 279). Therefore, the principle is employed to serve the Party's interests as it allows it to choose any political action while still retaining its credibility in the eyes of supporters. This can be linked to the group's participation in the Syrian civil war as discussed in Chapter Seven.

6.10.2 Hizbullah as the party for all Lebanese

Furthermore, Nasrallah's reference in 2006 to Hizbullah as a party for all Lebanese, Christians and Muslims alike, whose only yardstick is Lebanon's best interests against foreign aggression, provided him with the platform he needed to again downplay the Party's sectarian (Shi'ite) ties. It is notable however that since 2013 Nasrallah has signalled a change in regard to the Party's position on the civil war in Syria. As evidenced in the content analysis of his speeches, he increasingly refers to Hizbullah's active role as protector of Shi'ite shrines and minorities. Data presented in Chart 13 show that in 2013, Nasrallah's referred to Hizbullah as a party for the Shi'ite on average 4.46% times. This is compared to references to Hizbullah as a Party for all Lebanese on average 11.61% times during the same year. This is a significant turn-around given that he referred to Hizbullah as a Party for the Shi'ite on average only 0.55% of the time in all speeches from 2005 to 2012.

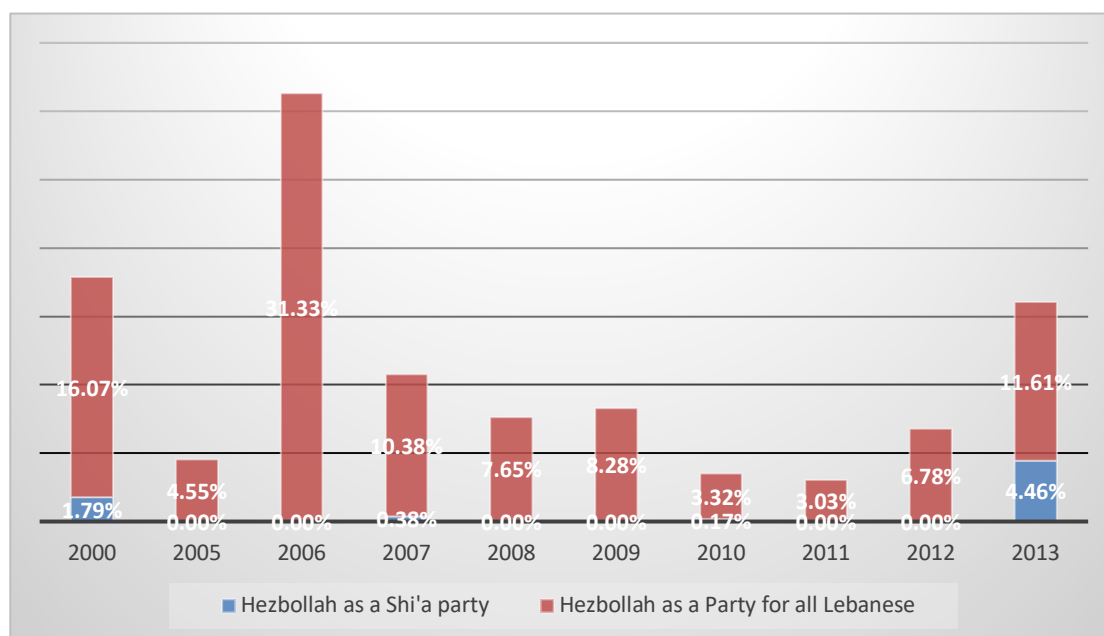


Chart 13: Nasrallah's references to Hizbullah as "a party for all Lebanese" vs. as "a party for the Shi'a" in his speeches by year.

Therefore, it is evident that Hizbullah's exploitation of religious principles is often undertaken as a political tactic. The principles are often embodied in the Party's everyday rhetoric in the areas under Hizbullah control such as Dahiye, and through Hizbullah's media outlets and communication strategy. This is also supported by the Party's institutional power which serves to mobilise historically marginalised Shi'ites.

6.10.3 A constituent conference at the horizon

Nasrallah stated in 2010:

Today I renew my call: We do not seek power. On the contrary, we are being criticized from several circles in the Opposition because we do not seek power. You hear their voices and they pick at us in internal sessions and at times in the media to the extent that some circles in the Opposition during 2009 elections accused Hizbullah of not acting seriously in the elections because Hizbullah did not want to achieve power and form an Opposition government. Aren't these facts?⁹³

⁹³ Alahednews (2010) Sayyed Nasrallah on October 28, 2010 on the Performance of International Investigation Committee, available at:
Analysis of Nasrallah's Speeches 2001-2013

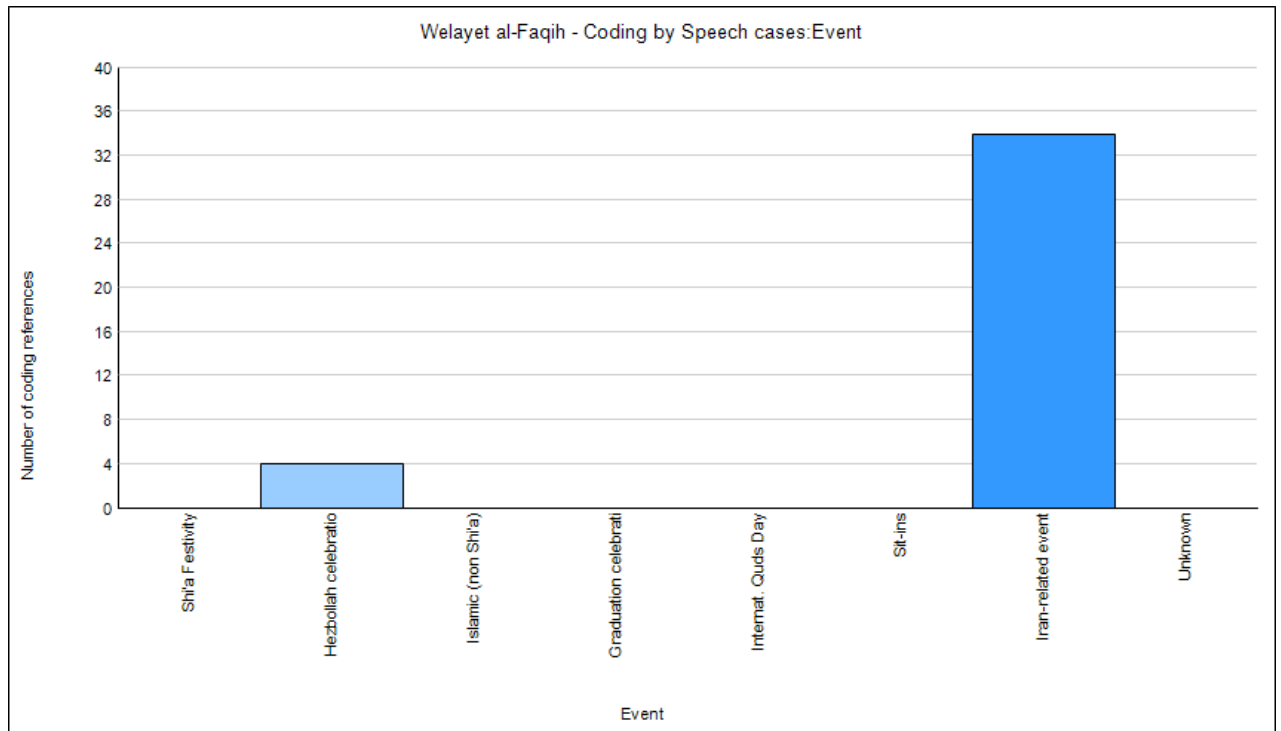


Chart 14 Nasrallah's references to *Welayet al-Faqih* in his speeches by event (2000-2013)

It would be premature to suggest that this statement identifies Hizbullah's ultimate objectives; however, when considering the course of action and achievements of the Party one cannot but raise the question of the Party's prospects. Hizbullah's ideology relies heavily on the doctrine of *Welayet al-Faqih* and the establishment of an Islamic system of rule. However, as discussed in previous chapters, this option is deemed unpractical by Hizbullah and therefore dismissed.

The content analysis of Nasrallah's speeches confirms this shift away from references to the *Welayet al-Faqih* doctrine. As shown in Chart 14, such references by Nasrallah occurred only sporadically from 2000 to 2013, such as when speaking at Hizbullah celebrations (4 times) or at Iran-related events including the anniversary of Khomeini's death (33 times).

<https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=12512&cid=451#.WXscDoV8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

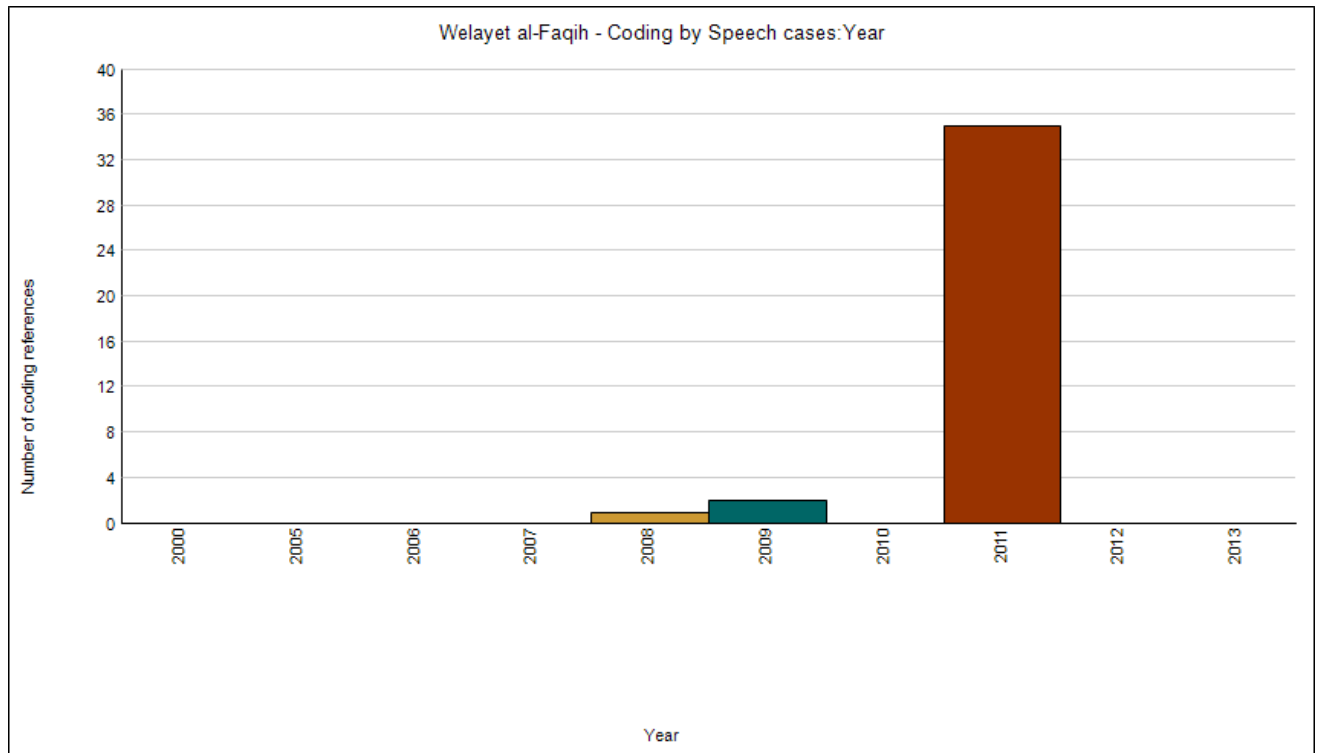


Chart 15: Nasrallah's references to *Welayet al-Faqih* in his speeches by year (2000-2013)

The content analysis produced similar results when Nasrallah's references to *Welayet al-Faqih* in his speeches was analysed by year. As shown in Chart 15, such references were uttered by Nasrallah significantly more in 2011 (35 times) compared to all other years from 2000 to 2013. This spike in the number of references to *Welayet al-Faqih* in 2011 particularly can most likely be explained by the growing intensity of the Syrian war and the need for Hizbullah to align itself with Iran and the Assad regime in the face of *takfiri*⁹⁴ groups.

⁹⁴ *Takfiri* groups are radical Islamist groups that accuse other Muslims of apostasy if they are not adherent to Islamic faith. This notion has been influenced by *Sayyid* Qutub's work on emphasizing the importance of Muslims to work and fight for the return of the rightful way of living in accordance with the Prophet's teachings. This notion has also influenced the shaping of Wahhabism and Salafism (Stahl 2011).
Analysis of Nasrallah's Speeches 2001-2013

Therefore, it can be argued that the Party refrains from attempts to gain further political control through its ties to *Welayet al-Faqih*, preferring instead to try a different pathway; therefore, practicing *taqiyya*.⁹⁵

6.10.4 Revision of the power sharing formula

The above analysis and discussion of Hizbullah's uses of religion in its rhetoric can be considered in relation to the capacity of Lebanon to shape its own destiny. Changes to regional power structures – such as is currently taking place between the U.S., Iran, Russia, and Saudi Arabia – can impact the power sharing formula in Lebanon as well as force Hizbullah to reassess its strategic position vis-à-vis this equation. Notwithstanding the assertions by numerous Hizbullah parliamentary members that “it would be folly to exclude Hizbullah from a new government.”⁹⁶ Norton (2007: 100-105) correctly points out that the Party's decision to fight alongside the Assad regime (deemed to be a tyrant regime by some Gulf States) in the Syrian conflict raises questions about its standing in the region as a pan-Arab and a trans-national group.

Nasrallah has emphasised that the parliamentary electoral law should reflect the powers that some groups have (e.g., Shi'ites) in a realistic way (i.e. power sharing). Thus, Nasrallah could be suggesting a “change” in the electoral system that would grant Shi'ites a better position in the government and parliament. This was partially secured in the Doha Accord after the May, 2008, clashes when Hizbullah gained the plus-one vote in the government (see Chapter One). Furthermore, Hizbullah has recently called for a constituent conference for Lebanon where possible changes to the parliamentary electoral law and the

⁹⁵ According to *Al-Shaykh Muhammad Ridha al-Mudhaffar* “al-Taqiyya should conform to specific rules vis-a-vis the situation wherein eminent danger is present; these rules, listed in many books of Fiqh (Jurisprudence), along with the severity of the danger determine the validity, or lack of, al-Taqiyya itself.” <http://www.al-islam.org/shiite-encyclopedia-ahlul-bayt-dilp-team/al-taqiyya-dissimulation-part-2> (Accessed 12th February, 2014).

⁹⁶ Mouzahem (2013) More obstacles to the formation of New Lebanon Government, available at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/09/lebanon-obstacles-government-formation.html> (Accessed 30th July 2014).

presidential powers are open for discussion. He even suggested there could be an opportunity to “recreate Lebanon’s power structure”.⁹⁷

Nasrallah’s request for adequate power sharing can be illustrated through Hizbullah’s proposal to modify the National Pact and the Tai’f Accord. In this case the power sharing formula would shift from one that is based on Muslim-Christian parity to a Sunni-Shi’ite-Christian triangle. This proposal follows Hizbullah’s establishment of the three-way equation: *Jayshe-sha’eb-moqawama* (People-Army-Resistance) which was directed towards nationalising *moqawama* as a necessity and as an essential part of any future defensive strategy. This was undertaken to ensure Hizbullah’s role in any future power allocation and to secure its legitimacy as a national resistance group. Nasrallah stated in 2011 that “Anyone who targets the army is serving Israel. I am not accusing anyone of being a traitor. The equation of the army, people, and Resistance alone can thwart Israel.”⁹⁸

Thus, Lebanese politics – in which Hizbullah seeks to play a leading role – is impacted by regional and international relations and exceptional circumstances that included imminent threats, civil strife, wars, political crises, and attacks against the national army. Indeed, some Christian groups have expressed concern that the power structures in the Lebanese government were shifting in such a way that the Shi’ite faction backed by Iran and Syria, and the Sunni factions backed by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, would ultimately wrestle for control (Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies: 2014).⁹⁹

In retrospect, Hizbullah’s aim to improve and sustain the social and political status of Shi’ites in Lebanon was a shrewd and pragmatic political act because support for the Party grew among this community as a result. As previously

⁹⁷ Mouzahem (2013). More obstacles to the formation of New Lebanon Government, available at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/09/lebanon-obstacles-government-formation.html> (Accessed 30th July 2014).

⁹⁸ Alahednews (2011) Sayyed Nasrallah on the Resistance and Liberation Day, available at: <https://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=14234&cid=452#.WXsdi4V8jU4> (accessed 30 July 2014).

⁹⁹ Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (2014). Lebanon: the Presidential Vacuum Awaiting Regional and International Agreements, available at: <http://english.dohainstitute.org/release/4c7601ce-b7a6-4d31-a12b-078698368946> (Accessed 30th July 2015).

established, the Lebanese state was notoriously lacking in its social provision to Lebanese Shi'ites and Hizbullah's act to fill this void played a key role in bolstering support for both its electoral politics (i.e. votes) and militia politics (i.e. manpower) agendas.

However, with the uncertainty surrounding the true intentions of Nasrallah (discussed in Chapter Three), it is, therefore, not guaranteed that resistance through "bottom-up" Islamisation will not take effect once the main objectives to empower the Shi'ite identity is achieved. Moreover, Hizbullah's pursuit of more political power may provoke a response by the Lebanese Sunni; an outcome that reminds us of the sectarian strife that erupted in Iraq during the post-Saddam period (Nasr 2007). The suicide attacks carried out by ISIS (and Al-Nusra Front) on Dahye in 2013 are an indication of the consequences for Hizbullah's intervention in the Syrian war which threatens its position in the country.

The Party vowed to make an effort to stop *fitna* – sectarian strife/discord in Lebanon. Nasrallah also referred to May 8, 2008, (following the clashes that erupted between the Future Movement - March 14 Bloc and March 8 Bloc-pro Hizbullah groups) as a "glorious day" because it eliminated a Sunni-Shi'a *fitna* (Al-Agha 2011: 147). However, the Party's participation in the Syrian War alongside the Alawite Assad regime against Sunni groups has undoubtedly placed it in a questionable position and forced it to justify the need to take part in the Syrian War to protect the axis of resistance, Lebanon, and religious shrines.

6.11 Conclusion

Speech structure and language are important to the success of a speech, but they alone cannot determine its success. The speaker's qualities and attributes such as character, knowing the audience, and speaking style are also among the factors that contribute to oratorical success. This chapter presented and discussed the results from a content analysis of Nasrallah's speeches from 2000 to 2013. The object of the analysis was to examine the extent to which religion is embedded in the leader, and used to legitimize the pragmatic pursuit of political objectives. The speech analysis was guided by the application of relevant themes including,

but not limited to, Hizbullah as protector of the Shi'ite community, use of oppressed vs. oppressor narrative, use of language of fear and threat, community development (women's role, education), Hizbullah as a party for all people, and *Welayet al-Faqih*. As such, elements of social mobilization theory were also considered in relation to the way in which Nasrallah's speeches functioned as mechanism that combines the demand and supply of protest to achieve social, cultural, and political outcomes (Klandermans 2013: 12).

The main findings to emerge from the analysis are that Nasrallah uses religion in his speeches to affirm Hizbullah's ideology and cause. Specifically, Nasrallah uses religious rhetoric, language devices, religious symbols, and speech context to shape the Party's image and identity, maintain a Shi'ite collective, and increase the Party's political base in Lebanon. As such, the analysis of Nasrallah's speeches clearly demonstrated that religion is apparent to a large extent in Hizbullah's everyday political rhetoric and that their use reflected the Social Movement Theory concepts of consensus mobilisation and action mobilisation (Klandermans 1984: 586) discussed in Chapter Three. Moreover, it was argued that key outcomes from the link between religiosity and politics in the Party's rhetoric include the creation of a space for the Party to protect and increase its political standing within the Shi'ite community in Lebanon, as well as to justify its decision making as a domestic and regional actor. The next chapter provides an in-depth exploration of Hizbullah's intervention in Syria as a necessary step to prevent the danger of ISIS/*takfiris* spreading into Lebanon. It also explores the use of religious doctrines/justifications to rally fighters into battle (a strategy Hizbullah excels in) for the protection of Shi'ite shrines.

7 Hizbullah's Intervention in the Syrian Conflict: Insights and Implications

We will sacrifice ourselves

O Zainab- we sacrifice ourselves for you

Troops of Hizbullah will obey you

We will sacrifice ourselves

O Zainab- we sacrifice ourselves for you

Troops of Hizbullah will obey you

We are revolutionaries of Hussain

A divine Light in all eyes

We are a double-edged sword

O Al Nusra- we will destroy you

O Takfiri, Listen

Our nation will never surrender

Abbas exists in us

O Zainab- we will sacrifice our souls for you

War Anthem by Hassan Harb¹⁰⁰

"We should be proud to live in Nasrallah's era" Suleiman Frangieh 2014, MP
and Head of Marada Movement in Lebanon

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81RM0dIKOII> (My Translation)
Hizbullah's Intervention in Syria

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated Hizbullah's use of religious rhetoric in its political program and campaigning. This chapter examines and analyses Hizbullah's intervention in the Syrian crisis and the justifications provided to convince its popular base of the religious necessity of this military intervention. The main argument presented to the reader is that the links between religiosity and politics in the rhetoric of Hizbullah to explain its involvement in Syria were extensive and served a pragmatic purpose; namely, to reduce the potential threat to the Party's political base in Lebanon as a result of its involvement in Syria. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section begins by outlining why Hizbullah's involvement in the Syrian conflict was selected as a case study. This is followed by a discussion of Hizbullah's response to the Arab Spring. This discussion is important as it provides the broader context to the emergent challenges to Nasrallah's powers of persuasion and to Hizbullah's standing as a legitimate "domestic" political force. Following this is a discussion of the reasons behind Hizbullah's intervention in Syria, such as the protection of the regime ('axis of resistance'), significance of the areas that Hizbullah is fighting in (such as Qusayr and Qalamoun), protection of religious shrines (*Sayyida Zainab shrine*¹⁰¹), protection of Lebanese borders with Syria, and finally stopping the spread and threat of *takfiris*. The second section focuses on the implications of this intervention on Hizbullah's reputation and the loyalty of its supporters.

7.2 Why the Case was Selected

This case of Hizbullah's intervention in Syria was selected for its usefulness in demonstrating the Party's politically pragmatic use of *taklif shari* (one of the tools discussed in chapter Four) to link its political and military agendas in Syria to religion in its rhetoric. The "pragmatic" use of *taklif shari* in this instance is best understood in its context. Hizbullah's entry into the Syrian conflict was swift and the Party remains one of the key non-state actors in the conflict (Choucair 2016: 1-2). However, Hizbullah's involvement remains both controversial and

¹⁰¹ *Sayyida Zainab* is the sister of the Imams Hassan and Hussein, and Grand-daughter of Prophet Mohammed. She was also a witness to Karbala massacre and has played a role in telling the story of Karbala.

unpopular among Arabs because it is seen to contribute to the broader problem of foreign military involvement in the region and what many believe is Iranian meddling in the outcome (Choucair 2016: 3). As previously established, Hizbullah's involvement in the Syrian conflict demonstrates a clear shift in the Party's role as "resistance" group on the domestic front to regional actor with a regional priority – which many believe is to protect Iranian axis interests (Deeb 2015). For many Arabs, the involvement calls into question Hizbullah's commitment to domestic issues and thus presents as a potential threat to Hizbullah's political base in Lebanon.

In terms of the use of *taklif shari*, the principles of reasoning and "necessity permits what is prohibited" is used as a framework to analyse how religiosity is tied to politics in Hizbullah's rhetoric to achieve pragmatic political outcomes, specifically, how religion is used to justify the Party's changes in its political agenda in response to domestic and regional events. This is highlighted in the religious narrative conducted to justify the intervention in Syria based on the need to protect the *Sayyida Zainab* shrine, and in targeting the *takfiris* as the enemy of not only Shi'ites, but also of all Muslims. In turn, it arguably demonstrates Hizbullah's pragmatic standpoint towards regional conflicts; that is, its reliance on Iran and the subsequent need for it to balance its domestic and regional priorities to protect its political future.

7.3 Arab spring in Perspective

The year 2011 was a turning point for the Arab world. The Middle East region ignited with continuous revolutions that emerged in Tunisia after Mohamad Bou Azizi set fire to himself in a demonstration of social and economic frustration. The events were quickly followed by mass demonstrations demanding the overthrow of President Ben Ali. Similarly, demonstrations took place in Egypt against President Mubarak, in Yemen against President Saleh, in Libya against Col. Qaddafi, in Bahrain to demand reforms, and in Syria against the Assad regime (Knio, 2013). However, each country had its own distinct context. For instance, in Syria, the demonstrations started as a people's initiative, but the intervention by regional and international actors in the country shifted the

conflict into a long-standing civil/proxy war (Sorenson 2016: 30). But it is important to note that the common demands of the demonstrators represented a call for better life opportunities, work, education and health (Al-Agha 2013).

In terms of Hizbullah's response to the Arab Spring, the Party publicly supported the demonstrations in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and Bahrain (Knio 2013). For example, Nasrallah openly supported the revolution as it erupted in Tunisia saying, "We must congratulate the Tunisian people on their historic revolution, their struggle, and their uprising". Also, in support of Libyan revolution, Nasrallah affirmed:

A group of young men and women rose and they were faced with bullets; war was imposed on the popular revolution. What is taking place in Libya is war imposed by the regime on a people that was peacefully demanding change; this people was forced to defend itself and war broke out in the east and the west, with warplanes, rocket launchers, and artillery. It brought back to our memory the 1982 invasion of Lebanon and all of Israel's wars. Such serious crimes should be condemned and the revolutionary people of Libya should be helped so as to persevere.¹⁰²

However, Hizbullah took a different standpoint in relation to the demonstrations in Syria. Nasrallah opposed the demonstrations and instead advised for "regime maintenance" (Knio 2013: 856). At one stage, he declared:

We call upon the Syrian people to maintain their regime of resistance, as well as to give way to the Syrian leadership to implement the required reforms and to choose the course of dialogue.¹⁰³

Hizbullah's "flexible" position on the Arab Spring events in the region has opened up debate among scholars who have questioned the consistency of Hizbullah's position towards its regional allies. In terms of this thesis, it is argued that Hizbullah's somewhat unanticipated position on the Syrian people's uprising is one of significance because of the importance of Syria to its operations.

¹⁰² Al-jazeera (2011) Arab Spring exposes Nasrallah's hypocrisy, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/06/2011618103354910596.html> (Accessed 30th July 2015).

¹⁰³ Al-jazeera (2011) Arab Spring exposes Nasrallah's hypocrisy, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/06/2011618103354910596.html> (Accessed 30th July 2015).

Syria provides training grounds for Hizbullah fighters as well as a passageway for the delivery of weapons. In turn, as Szelkey (2016: 75) explains that the significant shift in the alignment, between the Syrian-Iranian axis and the pro-Western axis, caused by the Syrian conflict resulted in a challenge to Hizbullah's image as a non-state domestic actor.

Undoubtedly, Hizbullah's response to the uprisings in Syria were perceived by many to be both Iranian driven and self-serving, prompting scholars such as Knio (2013) to argue that the Party's image needed to be reviewed if its identity and interests are to be understood. Yet, the Party's response to the unfolding events in Syria and its direct involvement in the Syrian conflict may also be a politically pragmatic act. That is, the Party's ideological flexibility provides it a new platform to respond pragmatically to changing domestic and regional circumstances (Al-Agha 2013; Khatib 2013). Specifically, Al-Agha (2013: 227) claims that Hizbullah demonstrated its ability to adapt to changing circumstances to meet its interests and to protect its survival. Interestingly, Al-Agha (2013: 218) also links the Party's political pragmatism to Shi'ite mythology and the notion that Shi'ites had to be adaptable as a result of their ongoing persecution. Thus, Hizbullah's "flexible" response to the unfolding Arab Spring events in the Middle East provides further evidence of the Party's orientation towards political pragmatism and adaptability through its use of a religious narrative (protection of Shi'ites) to achieve a strategic objective.

Furthermore, Khatib (2013) and Knio (2013) argue that the Party's capacity to employ its media institutions and *ta'bia* (recruitment) for regional conflicts is alarming. Certainly, Hizbullah has faced criticism from some Lebanese political factions such as the Future Movement, the Phalanges and Lebanese forces. These parties have strongly attacked Hizbullah for dragging Lebanon into a regional conflict and have questioned the Party's commitment to Lebanon (*Current Affair Report* 2014: 16). For example, Sammy Gemayel, a member of the Lebanese parliament for the Phalange party stated:

Our problem with Hizbullah is not Hizbullah in itself. It's the way Hizbullah is dealing with the Lebanese people — using force on the

Lebanese people and dragging Lebanon into a conflict that has nothing to do with Lebanon. These are our problems with Hizbullah. Any agreement that will keep Hizbullah acting the way it is, the way Hizbullah is acting today, we will fight it, because we will not allow Hizbullah to keep acting the way it is acting in Lebanon. Any agreement that will pacify Hizbullah, it would be something positive for us. It depends on what is the result of this agreement.¹⁰⁴

Gemayel added:

I really believe that the fact that Hizbullah went there, it attracted these people to come and fight it here. You know, when you decide to go fight a war in another country, you have to expect that these people will go fight you in your own country.¹⁰⁵

Levitt (2013) also recognises the significance of Hizbullah's close ties with Iran and Syria, arguing that Hizbullah had no other choice but to fight in Syria in order to protect Iran's agent in the Middle East. What is notable however is that, in the face of these attacks, Hizbullah relied on the use of religious, political and nationalistic arguments to justify the Party's intervention in Syria. For Nasrallah, Hizbullah is fighting in Syria to "protect Lebanon from the dangers of takfiris"¹⁰⁶, and an examination of the measures that the Party felt compelled to undertake is therefore of interest as it brings this study closer to the hypothesis that Hizbullah employs religion and religious tools; namely *taklif shari*, *fatwa*, and *ijtihad* (interpretation) of *jihad*, in pursuit of its political goals. Moreover, the use of religion also allows Hizbullah to justify its decisions by undertaking a malleable or pragmatic approach that is embedded in the widely accepted (and practiced) notion of *ijtihad* or *fatwa*, as evidenced in the Party's flexible response to the unfolding Arab Spring in different countries in the region.

¹⁰⁴ Al-Monitor (2013), Hizbullah in Syria hurts Lebanon, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/12/gemayel-hezbollah-syria-hurt-lebanon.html##ixzz3X9H6XnNn> (Accessed 30th July 2014).

¹⁰⁵ Al-Monitor (2013), Hizbullah in Syria hurts Lebanon, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/12/gemayel-hezbollah-syria-hurt-lebanon.html##ixzz3X9HXdE00> (Accessed 30th July 2014).

¹⁰⁶ Al-jazeera (2011) Arab Spring exposes Nasrallah's hypocrisy, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/06/2011618103354910596.html> (Accessed 30th July 2015).

7.4 Insights into Hizbullah's Intervention in Syria: Self-Preservation

Principle, Necessity, and *Takfiris* as the enemy of all Muslims

Hizbullah's assistance to the Assad regime in Syria was initially concentrated on military training and warfare tactics offered to Syrian soldiers (Sorenson 2016). However, the Party soon found itself involved directly in the conflict when it sent troops to fight in Lebanon's northern borders with Syria, and later on in Homs, Qusayr and Qalamoun. This was followed by the Party's engagement in battle in Damascus under the justification of protecting the *Sayyida Zainab* shrine (see below).

Despite the steady increase in its involvement, however, there were attempts by the Party to keep its level of involvement and the numbers of casualties it suffered undisclosed. For example, to limit information about death tolls, families were "instructed to keep quiet on the circumstances of the deaths" (*Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst*, 2012). This is linked to the self-preservation principle that the Party adopts¹⁰⁷ and is also closely related to *taqiyya*, where the notion of not revealing the full truth may be taken to mean the offer of misleading information (dissimulation).¹⁰⁸ However, soon enough the number of funerals held in Lebanese villages disclosed to the public the significant losses that Hizbullah was suffering. Indeed, in a 2014 *Al-Akhbar* newspaper article titled, "What is the death toll of Hizbullah fighters in Syria", Hisham Ashkar estimated the number of fighters who had died in Syria by counting the number of funerals held in Shi'ite villages. Ashkar's chart, in parallel with the reports of the Syria Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) and Hizbullah's limited declarations, indicated that as of December 2013, the death toll was 232. In March, 2014, the number of deaths reported by the SOHR had increased to 332. The chart below shows the death toll of the fighters and the regions from which they came¹⁰⁹:

¹⁰⁷ Self-preservation notion has been used by Party's recruitment and training and by the Party's psychological war with Israel.

¹⁰⁸ As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, Shi'ites had to adopt a dissimulation strategy in order to protect themselves from Sunni persecution, the notion entails that Shi'ites would not declare their true sect and would live under the authority of the local ruling until the return of the Twelfth Imam (Mahdi), from his disappearance, otherwise known as the Occultation period.

¹⁰⁹ Image Courtesy of *Al-Akhbar* Newspaper, available at: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/19226/> (Accessed 30th July 2014).

1 January 2012 - 29 March 2014



The case of Hizbullah's involvement in the Syrian war provides an illustrative example of how the Party mixes religiosity with politics to address accusations of disloyalty to Lebanon and of being hypocritical in its agenda. Such accusations were quickly forthcoming from the March 14 bloc, the Party's main opposition and previous claimant as protector of the "oppressed" (*Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst Report*, 2013). Hizbullah's actions were also in defiance of the country's "dissociation initiative" concluded as part of the Baabda Agreement by then president, Michel Suleiman. The declaration was accepted and adopted by all political factions (including Hizbullah) and aimed to neutralise Lebanon from regional conflicts in general and the Syrian conflict particularly (*Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst*, 2012).¹¹⁰

Although the Baabda Agreement was designed to shield Lebanon from potential threats, it soon lost its value when it was discovered that some political factions were providing aid to different sides in the Syrian crisis. Saad Hariri, for instance, the head of the Future Movement and foe of the Assad regime, was found to be aiding the Syrian opposition with money and weapons, in part because of Assad's alleged involvement in the murder of his father, former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri (Deeb 2015). Additionally, Hizbullah's consistent statements that the Syrian conflict "is a danger that threatens all Lebanese" and that the goal of the *takfiris* should they gain control of the borders is to "transform Lebanon into a part of their Islamic state" de-valued the essence of the Baabda declaration.¹¹¹ Hence, the use of the *takfiris'* threat was an essential element in Hizbullah's justification for opposing the Baabda Agreement and for taking part in the Syrian war.

7.4.1 The Syrian war

With the Syrian uprising in its sixth year, it has shifted from a peaceful uprising to the bloodiest war in the region (Khatib 2015). As such, there is a great deal of scrutiny of Hizbullah's involvement and pressure on Nasrallah to convince Party

¹¹⁰ Baabda Agreement entailed "keeping Lebanon away from the policy of regional and international conflicts and sparing it the negative repercussions of regional tensions and crises" (*TheDailyStar* 2013).

¹¹¹ BBC News (2014) Hezbollah leader Nasrallah vows to keep fighters in Syria, available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26222171> (Accessed January 20, 2015).

supporters of the legitimacy of its actions. To “crush the opposition”, the Assad regime used military attacks as well as some *Jihadist* ex-prisoners in order to undermine the moderation of the opposition (Khatib 2015; Smyth 2015). For instance, former *jihadist* prisoners were released by the regime to carry out terrorist attacks under the name of Islamist groups (Levitt 2013). However, the Assad regime ultimately realised that these groups had become an overwhelming threat that was difficult to contain. Eventually, Assad had to rely on his patrons: Russia, Iran and Hizbullah (Smyth 2015; Khatib 2015) for greater support, and this placed increasing pressure on the Party to be more explicit in its regional agenda. Notably, during the early stages of the uprisings, February to May 2011, Hizbullah did not issue any political statements. When Nasrallah did comment on the issues for the first time in May, 2011, he called for dialogue between the regime and opposition to resolve their differences, while also reminding his audience of Syria’s role and sacrifice in helping to bring stability to Lebanon during the country’s own civil war (*Jane’s Islamic Affairs Analyst* 2012).

During the following months, Nasrallah continued to affirm Hizbullah’s support of Assad based on his regime’s resistance to Western pressure. Nasrallah stated in an interview on *Al-Mayadeen* TV in January, 2015, that any strike on Syria (from Israel) “targets the whole of the resistance axis”.¹¹²

It would appear that it was at this point that Nasrallah was starting to prepare Hizbullah followers for the future “necessary measures” that the party would need to take to protect its regional ally. Borghans and Rapp-Hooper (2013) claim that since Hizbullah represents a proxy agent for Iran in the Middle East, and because of the alliance dynamics that surround the Iran-Syria-Hizbullah relationship, Hizbullah had to engage in the war in Syria to protect the alliance, even if the Party saw it as endangering its political support in Lebanon. There is little doubt that the significant strategic and political benefits Hizbullah gained from this alliance could jeopardise the Party’s domestic position by making it militarily vulnerable and politically isolated if it were to allow the regime to fall

¹¹² *Al-Akhbar* (2015), Nasrallah warns Israel against any “stupid” moves in Lebanon, Syria, available at: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/23240> (Accessed 30th July 2016).
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(Saouli 2014). This was evident in Nasrallah's continuous pleas for negotiations to try to achieve a peaceful settlement in the first months of the conflict. Moreover, Nasrallah's pleas support the central argument in this thesis that the Party was increasingly seeking to employ religious pragmatism to achieve its political agenda.

As Nasrallah reiterated in his interview with Julian Assange in 2012:

This is the first time I say this – We [Hizbullah] contacted [...] the opposition to encourage them and to facilitate the process of dialogue with the regime. But they rejected dialogue.

Nasrallah continued,

Right from the beginning we have had a regime that is willing to undergo reforms and prepared for dialogue. On the other side, you have an opposition which is not prepared for dialogue and it is not prepared to accept reforms. All it wants is to bring down the regime. This is a problem.¹¹³

Nasrallah was also aware of the more politically vulnerable position the Party was placed in due to its involvement in the conflict. It was especially difficult to overlook the disproportionate responses of the Assad army against demonstrators (who largely came from the Sunni majority) (*Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst*, 2012) and Hizbullah's active support for the government would then be perceived as siding with an "oppressive" regime. Such an image challenged the notion that Hizbullah's ideology relies heavily on popular support and recruitment; that it is a movement that sides with the oppressed against the oppressors (*Current Affairs Report*, 2014). Another issue that Hizbullah was forced to address was the sectarian characteristics of the conflict; namely, the image of the Alawite Assad regime attacking the Sunni majority. Such images could jeopardise Hizbullah's position as a shield against *fitna* (division) (Al-Agha 2013).

¹¹³Naharnet (2012) Nasrallah to Assange: We Contacted Syrian Opposition Urging Dialogue with Regime, available at: <http://m.naharnet.com/stories/en/37094-nasrallah-to-assange-we-contacted-syrian-opposition-urging-dialogue-with-regime> (Accessed 30th July 2014).
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The conflict in Syria had rapidly found a fertile environment for expansion in Lebanon due to already existing divisions among Lebanese.

Given these circumstances, the point of interest in this thesis is the way in which Hizbullah sought to engage in several political and media campaigns to frame its intervention in Syria as “necessary” and “inevitable” for the protection of *moqawama* (resistance) and Lebanon’s security (Dabashi 2011). This provides insights into the main research question of this thesis in that it demonstrates the way in which Hizbullah provided a solid pretext / justification for its intervention in Syria through the use of religion: the religious narrative of protecting Shi’ite shrines; and the dangers of *takfiris* spreading to Lebanon. Adding that this danger, but closer to home, were the reported attacks on the northern borders with Syria. In tightening the religiosity-politics connection, Hizbullah moved the focus away from sectarianism and framed it within a nationalistic narrative.

The first reasoning of Hizbullah’s intervention came as a need to protect those Lebanese villages bordering Syria. These villages fall on the northern areas of Lebanon and are home to approximately 20,000 people, many of whom are Shi’ites (*Jane’s Islamic Affairs Analyst*, 2013). Hizbullah’s rhetoric was that the Party was not directing the conflict in these villages, but rather it was the people’s natural response to arm and defend themselves. However, a Shi’ite politician stated in an interview with *Al-Monitor* newspaper that Hizbullah used the bordering villages’ situation as a pretext for its military intervention. The politician asserted:

I know the region that Nasrallah mentioned very well. It only includes eight villages, each inhabited by 300 to 400 Shi’ites. Most of them have left their homes due to the dangerous security situation and fled to the Bekaa region in Lebanon, where they originally come from. So we are talking about a maximum of 3,000 people [inside this region].¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Hajj (2013), What Is the Extent of Hezbollah's Involvement in Syria? Available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/originals/2013/04/hezbollah-involvement-syria-conflicting-information.html#ixzz4oTfjLq6I> (Accessed 30th July 2014).
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The Party used the threat against the Lebanese Shi'ite villages as justification for its military strategy and amplified the threat to serve this objective. This is because these towns are located on the Lebanese-Syrian border and are important in linking Damascus to the city of Homs. They are known to be part of the channel for the transfer of weapons from Iran to Syria and to Hizbullah. Hence, the threatened areas fall between the Lebanese border and the city of Homs. Hizbullah had therefore initially framed its justification for intervention solely on the need to protect Lebanese Shi'ite villages. However, the religious rhetoric in Nasrallah's speeches intensified in May and June, 2014, when he spoke to his audience of the need to go into the town of Al-Qusayr, a Syrian town, in order to protect the holy Shi'ite shrine of *Sayyida Zainab* from al-Qaeda's affiliated groups and Salafists¹¹⁵. Nasrallah had now combined the threat to Lebanon generally with the threat to Shi'ites traditions more specifically.

Nasrallah was thus beginning to represent Hizbullah's intervention as inevitable and labelled the Salafist groups as an "existential threat". Indeed, he warned in a 2014 speech that "if takfiris achieve victory in Syria, we would all be eliminated in Lebanon, not just the resistance".¹¹⁶ In this way, Nasrallah had once again reminded Lebanese Shi'ites of an imminent threat to them, a tactic that was previously used for political gain when fighting Israel and was now being used for regional conflicts. As such, use of the religious narrative parallels with the *ijtihad* principle discussed in chapter 4 in relation to the way in which Nasrallah legitimises the Party's participation in a conflict in accordance with the Party's needs (Khatib 2015; Szeleky 2016).

It is reasonable to suggest that the Party had commenced a propaganda campaign using religion as a central theme to secure its position as a legitimate armed group (Khatib 2015). Nonetheless, Hizbullah's position in the Syrian crisis tested the Party's standing among its Shi'ite supporters. Iran, along with its

¹¹⁵ Hajj (2013), What Is the Extent of Hezbollah's Involvement in Syria? Available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/originals/2013/04/hezbollah-involvement-syria-conflicting-information.html#ixzz4oTfjLq6I> (Accessed 30th July 2014).

¹¹⁶ Al-Akhbar (2014), Nasrallah: If takfiris succeed in Syria, all in Lebanon will be eliminated, available at: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/19213> (Accessed 30th July 2015).
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affiliated Iraqi Shi'ite groups, framed their participation in Syria in the context of the protection of the *Sayyida Zainab* shrine. As Smyth (2015: 4) reminds us; "Given its location in southern Damascus, with the international airport to its east, the shrine's strategic value cannot be overlooked". Additionally, Levitt and Zelin (2013) indicated that Hizbullah used the *Sayyida Zainab* site to identify prospective militant recruits and as a cover for members to travel between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Hence considerable efforts were made to present the Iranian role as protector of the shrine under religious narratives. For instance, "The site's prominence in the view of Shi'ite fighters is further evidenced by the shrill, mantra-like chant "*Labayk ya Zainab!*" (At your service, O Zainab!), sung regularly at funerals for Lebanese Hizbullah members and Iraqi Shi'ites killed in Syria. Propaganda songs produced by Iraqi Shi'ite organisations and Hizbullah have also featured the slogan" (Smyth 2015: 4). The site's significance was also related to the emergence of pan-Shi'ism in the face of Sunni *Jihadist* groups such as ISIS. In a televised speech on August 2, 2013, Nasrallah emphasised the group's role in underpinning Islamic unity in fighting Israel. Nasrallah stated:

Hizbullah, the Islamic Shi'a party, will not abandon Palestine, al-Quds, and the holy sites of the nation. We were born and arisen on bearing the responsibility of defending Palestine and al-Quds. We—the Shi'ites—won't abandon this cause, never, ever. Describe us as rejectionists [*rawafidh*], describe us as terrorists, describe us as criminals, say whatever you want and keep killing us at every front, at the door of every mosque, *we the Shi'ites of Ali bin Abi Talib will not abandon Palestine* (My emphasis).

Therefore, given that Hizbullah had positioned itself as the defender of Islamic shrines and resistance to the Americans and Israelis, the narrative of fighting Western-backed *takfiris* became more credible (and perceived as necessary) over time.

Nasrallah reiterated his claim of Western support of *takfiris* in his speech in August, 2013, when referring to the notion of "Shi'a expansionism" which he asserted was invented by America and Israel to confuse and exploit Muslims.

According to Nasrallah, such claims were made to convince many Islamic groups of the “threat” posed by Iran and the need to confront the Shi’ite danger. In this way, Shi’ite ideology and Shi’ite expansionism are depicted as posing a greater danger to the *Ummah* than Israel because of the Shi’a intent to destroy the region, its people, and its armies, and its people. Hence, Nasrallah suggests that anyone who supports the *takfiri* groups in the Islamic world is simply benefiting and assisting Israel and America (Smyth 2015: 11).

This is in parallel with the *fatwa* of Sheikh Shams al-Din to start Shi’ite resistance in south Lebanon after the death of two Shi’ite residents as a result of an Israeli disruption of an *Ashoura* commemoration (Hamzeh 2004). This may also be related to Sistani’s *fatwa* to resist and fight American led-coalition troops in Iraq in 2003. Hence, the role of Shi’ite clerics is essential to legitimise militant violence. Religious actors use militant violence to justify the way they seek to influence the state (Philpot et al. 2011) and thus religion becomes a platform for strategic gains.

The statement of the Popular Committee for the Mobilisation to defend *Sayyida* Zainab, in December, 2013, offers the religious figures’ support for their decision to fight in Syria. The objectives of the intervention into Syria were to defend Shi’ites, the *Ahl al-Bait*, Islamic shrines and the resistance. The *takfiri* groups in Syria had been directly targeting Shi’ite shrines and so Nasrallah declared the intent to fight against the assailants in Syria – and to also have a presence in Iraq, especially in Najaf. In turn, he likens this action to the time when the Prophet emerged in Medina to confront the *mushrikin* [idolaters] when informed of their quest to destroy Islam. As such, Hizbullah’s actions are depicted as defensive in nature and thus do not require permission from others to be undertaken. Notwithstanding that permission is not required, the *jihad* in Syria is overseen by a legitimate ruler; namely the *Wali al-Faqih* is in charge of managing the religious and political affairs of men, and who referred back directly to the Ayatollah Khamenei, Iran’s Supreme Leader (Smyth 2015: 15).

While the legitimacy of these religious figures and their commitment to *Welayet al-Faqih* cannot be doubted, there are some questions regarding their support for the war in Syria. Such questions do not diminish the legitimacy of those who fight out of obligation (duty to go to war) and there is support for this obligation in *Wali al-Faqih*. Not having an interest in going to war and labelling the war as illegitimate are two different matters. Moreover, given the support for the leadership and capabilities of *Wali al-Faqih* from highly-ranked religious figures, the legitimacy of fighting *takfiri* groups to defend Shi'ites in Syria and *Sayyida Zainab*, and to defend Shi'ite existence in Iraq, was not brought into question (Smyth 2015: 15).

In this way, the intervention in the Syrian war has been framed within a religious narrative such as the protection of the *Sayyida Zainab* shrine from the imminent threat of the *takfiris* against Shi'ites, as well as all other Muslims, and in protecting the resistance axis against American and Israeli threats to the region. Yet, the intervention was set to serve a strategic purpose to safeguard Hizbullah's weapons route from Iran and to commit to the *Wali's taklif shari* to take part in the fight against these *takfiri* groups. "Thus, the conflict was morphed into a romantic *jihad* addressing a varied existential threat" (Smyth 2015: 8). It is important now to examine how Hizbullah has sought to legitimise its participation in the Syrian war under its use of *taklif shari*.

7.4.2 Hizbullah's intervention as necessary: the reasoning of *taklif shari*

Central to this thesis is the discussion of relationship between Hizbullah's pragmatism and ideology. As this chapter has argued, Nasrallah, as a religious leader, has argued the necessity of participating in the Syrian conflict in order to protect the axis of resistance and religious shrines. The Party has used the justification of protecting the *Sayyida Zainab* shrine, and the imminent threat to Lebanon from *takfiris*, as a way to convince its popular base of the need to fight in Syria. As suggested in the previous chapters, Hizbullah has demonstrated its success in homogenising the Shi'ite community and in controlling and maintaining the Party's dominance over it. The Party has argued that, as a result

of its actions over time, it has become the only protector of the Shi'ites and the Lebanese nation. In addition, this has been reinforced by the exploitation of several elements such as fear, the provision of social services, the apparent success of the Party's strategy, realistic objectives, and lastly, the branding of Hizbullah and Nasrallah.

In addition, the Party has employed *taklif shari* to consolidate its position. As previously noted, *taklif shari* is a religious command re-introduced in 1979 by Khomeini which gives power to the *Faqih* to require all supporters to abide by his commands or risk disobeying God (Hamzeh 2004; Ibrahim 2007). Since Nasrallah is considered the highest religious figure in Hizbullah, he has the power to apply *taklif shari*. Therefore, *taklif shari* has been instrumental in rallying people for demonstrations (Hamzeh 2004), for voting (Hamzeh 2004; Sankari 2005; Al-Agha 2013), and for forcing fighters to fight in Syria (Smyth 2015). This use of *taklif shari* for political causes, however, has been criticised. For example, Sayyid Fadlallah criticised Hizbullah's use of *taklif*

shari to call for people to participate in voting and for rallying in demonstrations (Sankari 2005). Fadlallah argued that *taklif shari* must be utterly respected as a religious duty and should not be employed for political gains because the people would lose their individual right to express their opinions and would be bound to obey a God-given command (cited in Sankari 2005; Al-Agha 2013). However, as argued throughout this chapter, religion has played a central role in Hizbullah's transition towards more politically pragmatic decision making. As such, the Party's uses of *taklif Shari* further demonstrates the Party's employment of religious tools in contexts it deems to represent special circumstances to enhance its survival and to pursue its political agenda.

Hence, all these elements were catalysed by the Party's religious ethos which entitled it to offer contextualised justification to events such as the 2006 war with Israel, 2008 domestic clashes, and more recently, fighting in Syria. Nevertheless, in a study by Al-Agha (2013) on Shi'ite "manual of *jihad* and martyrdom", nine

circumstances are outlined when a defensive *jihad* is permitted in reference to *Qur'anic* verses. These circumstances can be summarised as:

- 1- If the enemies of Islam attack the Muslim countries in order to eliminate Islam (reference to *Qur'anic* verse 2:190)
- 2- If the enemies of Islam attacked any of the Muslim countries in order to control and colonise them (in reference to *Qur'anic* verse 22:39-40)
- 3- If a Muslim country is attacked by another Muslim country... then the aid should come to the victim Muslim country (in reference to *Qur'anic* verse 49:9)
- 4- If there is an onslaught on the public wealth of Muslims
- 5- If there is an offensive against the selves, possessions, and dignities of the Muslims
- 6- If there is an onslaught on worshipping God, and the mosques and places of prayer are attacked by the enemies in order to obliterate Islam (in reference to *Qur'anic* verse 22:40)
- 7- Conduct *Jihad* in order to defend Islamic culture and ethical norms, and preclude anti-Islamic cultural and moral campaigns from targeting the Islamic *Umma*
- 8- Conduct *Jihad* in order to defend the oppressed (in reference to *Qur'anic* verse 4:75)
- 9- Conduct *Jihad* in order to prevent the propagation of materialism and atheism (in reference to *Qur'anic* verse 4:74) (Al-Agha 2013: 47-48)

Therefore, of the abovementioned nine circumstances, which can be employed to justify intervening in Syria? The answer lies to a large extent in the extent to which Hizbullah characterised ISIS as an "enemy" of Islam. By asserting that ISIS was indeed an enemy of Islam (principles 1 and 2) intent on creating political and social instability in the region to take control of Iraq and Syria, Hizbullah sought to justify its intervention in Syria; namely, to come to the aid of "the victim Muslim country" (principle 3) necessary for Shi'ite protection and protection of Lebanon (principle 5). In adopting this position, the Party "interpreted" the rules of offensive *jihad* according to context-specific circumstances to achieve a political outcome.

7.5 Implications of Hizbullah's intervention in the Syrian war

Perhaps the most serious consequence of Hizbullah's intervention in Syria is the direct reprisal attacks that targeted Shi'ite areas around Beirut in particular. In 2013, there were a number of explosions that shook a Hizbullah stronghold in a

Shi'ite neighbourhood to the south of the city. Between 2013 and 2014, Lebanon experienced 16 car bomb attacks that mainly targeted Shi'ite areas (Schenker 2015). These attacks were considered to be a "response" from the Al-Nusra Front and later from ISIS against Hizbullah because of its intervention in Syria and as revenge for the killing of "innocent Syrians". One of the groups responsible for the bombing of Rweiss (a southern Beirut suburb) in 2013 stated in a video broadcast that, "Hassan Nasrallah is an agent of Iran and Israel and we promise him more and more [attacks]" (Schenker 2015). In its statement taking credit for the attack [in Rweiss], ISIS declared; "We tell the Party of Satan [a derogatory reference to Hizbullah, the "Party of God"] and its agent, the Lebanese army, that this is the first rain and we tell you that there are hundreds of people seeking suicide, who love the blood of rejectionists [used pejoratively to refer to Shi'ites]" (Smyth 2015: 48). Therefore, Hizbullah's claim to be the protector of Lebanon from the threat of these groups quickly came under challenge, with the Party now faced with an alarming reaction to its intervention in Syria. Significantly, some of these attacks were on the Party's headquarters, which were meant to be highly secure, raising questions about the unity of the Party's inner circle and the effectiveness of its security apparatus. The Party's hard-earned reputation for its secretive and secure nature has been put to question.

A survey of Hizbullah's popularity after the intervention in Syria would have provided interesting insights into the Party's standing among Lebanese people. However, due to the sensitivity of the topic and the group, obtaining quantitative data to test the Party's relationship with its Shi'ite constituency is difficult. As a result, observers are left to rely on political analysis and interpretation. Yet things are starting to take a different turn. As of 2013, ShiaWatch claims to have developed the ability to collect data from Shi'ite communities in Beirut such as the poll by *Hayya Bina* in 2014 (see below). Interestingly, ShiaWatch was accused by Nasrallah of working under the supervision of the American embassy in Lebanon (Al-Akhbar 2013). It is of note that during this period, many Shi'ite opposition individuals emerged to denounce Hizbullah's monopolisation of the Shi'ite community and for exposing their constituency to a new threat to

maintain their hegemony and political goals. Among these critics, Rami Ollaik stands out. A former member of the Party who has written two books on some of the inner workings of the organisation, Ollaik appeared on television talk shows trying to explain the Party's hegemonic influence over Shi'ites by creating an imaginary continuous threat or fear. Ollaik also spoke about the Party's attempt to silence him by attacking his car while driving to participate in a seminary talk in the town of Yohmor.¹¹⁷ Other prominent figures considered as Shi'ite opposition are Sheikh Hani Fahs (a Shi'ite intellectual), *Sayyid* Ali Al-Amin, the former *Mufti* of Tyre and Jabal Amil, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Hajj Hassan, the leader of the Free Shi'ite Movement, Sheikh Yusuf Kanj, and Sheikh Subhi Al-Tofeili (former Secretary-General to Hizbullah) (Al-Agha 2013:127).

For 30 years, Hizbullah has sought to maintain credibility as a resistance group, even during the 2006 war. However, the case this time is different. A poll conducted by *Hayya Bina* organisation (*ShiaWatch*) in Dahye in 2014, headed by a progressive Shi'ite and Hizbullah critic, Lokman Slim, indicated that even though respondents supported Hizbullah's intervention in Syria (95.3%), some still considered Lebanon to be going in "the wrong direction" (59%), and 74% indicated that their financial situation was "worse than the year before" (*ShiaWatch* 2014). Also, 75% responded that "they knew someone who has been killed in Syria". 53% indicated "Hassan Nasrallah is the leader they trust most" (*ShiaWatch* 2014). Even though the study stands alone in providing data on the people's attitudes, it does provide an overall picture of the atmosphere surrounding Dahye residents. Moreover, while 74% of respondents reported that their financial situation was in decline, they still had trust in Nasrallah, which confirms Nasrallah's success as a leader and a brand (*ShiaWatch* 2014).

The emergence of public criticism and the results of the *Hayya Bina* poll may indicate the re-consideration by Shi'ites of the role of Hizbullah as a Lebanese party. Yet the attacks on Shi'ite areas do not only represent the implications of the intervention. Sunni-Shi'ite clashes and possible escalations also represented

¹¹⁷ Now (2013), Hezbollah critic and relatives threatened, available at: <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/archive/hezbollah-critic-receives-death-threats-grandmothers-house-attacked> (Accessed 12th June 2014).
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a new challenge to the Party's major claim to reject *fitna* (sectarianism). June, 2013, witnessed the first signs of serious tensions between Sunnis and Shi'ites in the town of Sidon. The Lebanese Salafist sheikh, Ahmad Al-Assir, declared himself as a patron of Sunnis against the "party of the devil" in referring to Hizbullah (Party of God) and vowed to take back "Sunni dignity". Because of Al-Assir's escalating language, he found sympathisers in Tripoli and northern Lebanon (Saouli 2014). This sympathy was elevated after the army attacked him in Sidon, putting an end to his campaign. After that, the army was perceived as a Hizbullah agent and numerous attacks on army checkpoints and ambushes took place.¹¹⁸

Events such as these contribute to this thesis by providing further evidence of Hizbullah's (albeit failed) attempts to achieve a politically pragmatic domestic outcome in response to volatile regional issues. Similar to events in 2006, Hizbullah took pre-emptive action using the justification that intervention in Syria was the lesser evil when considered in relation to the spread of *takfiris*/ISIS into Lebanon. It remains to be seen whether this justification based on pragmatism does irreparable damage to the Party's standing in Lebanon.

Additionally, the political paralysis of the country can be seen as another indication of the implications of Hizbullah's intervention in Syria. The election of General Michel Aoun came after one and a half years of deadlock over the presidency. In addition, the parliament has extended its term, since it was argued that it was impossible to conduct elections in such "unsecured and unstable times", as the Lebanese Interior Minister, Nuhad Al-Machnouq, stated in a televised interview in 2014 (Schenker 2015).

Perhaps the most important development is the Party's human and material losses. The Party's continuous goal of fighting Israel has now been exposed to questions as the Party is sending its troops to Syria while Israel can take advantage of this and open a new front in the south which could jeopardise the

¹¹⁸ Mortada (2014), Assir faces death penalty, aimed to establish Free Lebanese Army, available at: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/18839> (Accessed 30th July 2015).
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Party's military capabilities and would weaken its positions (*Foreign Policy* 2016). Also, the death of Jawad Moughnie¹¹⁹ is a great loss for the Party, knowing his rank and importance. And even though Hizbullah still portrays its dead fighters as martyrs and celebrates their deaths, it is notable that the Party that was based on voluntary recruitment is now advertising to attract fighters to go for *jiḥād* in Syria. During its first 30 years of existence, Hizbullah had never advertised for recruits, however, this new phenomenon makes one question the Party's standing among its Shi'ite constituency.



¹¹⁹ Jawad Moughnie is the son of Imad Moughnie who was considered the second man in Hizbullah's hierarchy. Imad Moughnie was in charge of Hizbullah's ground operations (Levitt 2013) until his assassination by Israeli agents in 2008.
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Hizbullah's full-fledged participation in the seemingly endless conflict in Syria has forced it to institute unprecedented recruitment efforts. The poster above, which *ShiaWatch* captured in July 18, 2014, in Bourj al-Barajneh, reads "Recruitment campaign for individuals to help defend the holy family of the Prophet." At left, "Please contact the recruitment office or call [two phone numbers are given]."

The advertisement poster is not the only way Hizbullah has reached out for fighters to join the conflict in Syria. Smyth (2015: 28) reminds us that Iran's Iraqi proxies have long used a combination of Facebook pages, blogs, and websites as part of their online recruitment network. Social media platforms are used to disseminate recruitment notices and to announce the creation of a new militia group. Moreover, such online recruitment platforms are preferred given the relatively anonymity they afford Hizbullah, their capacity to interact directly with the target audience, their low cost, and the ability to replicate websites when recruitment efforts are disrupted (Smyth 2015: 28).

The purpose of the use of social media was to gather the biggest number of recruits for the fight in Syria, as it needed to overcome widespread reluctance to fight in support of the Assad regime. Therefore, the social media platform was designed for easy approach and access. Smyth (2015: 29) explains that the use of Facebook and YouTube to recruit fighters was not common to all established groups. In addition, potential recruits were often required to search concealed Facebook profiles to upload images embedded with the group's phone number. For example, the *Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada* (KSS)¹²⁰ would use imagery of Shi'ite militia organisations as part of its 2013 campaign and post photos of recruitment posters including phone numbers. In 2014, however, the KSS started to post images featuring phone numbers on its difficult-to-access Facebook profile designed for Internet distribution.

¹²⁰ A Shi'ite militant organization operation in Syria and Iraq.
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Additionally, what is interesting is the timing of these campaigns, which carries important religious connotations. The advertisements became active online during the October–November, 2013, *Ashoura* commemoration and the *Arbain* [40th day commemoration] from December, 2013, to February, 2014 (Smyth 2015: 30–31). The group (KSS) made posters with embedded phone numbers for display on the main streets of Najaf and Karbala (Shi'ite holy cities) along routes travelled by those visiting Shi'ite holy sites. Moreover, unlike the recruitment programs of ISIS or other Sunni *jihadist* organizations, a centralised structure was maintained by Iran's Shi'ite proxies to coordinate its online recruitment and indoctrination programs (Smyth 2015: 30–31).

Hence, with the increased use of the religious narrative Hizbullah can increase its chances of success in the Syrian towns of Al-Qusayr, Nabul and Zahra. In addition to reinforcing security in these towns, Hizbullah has shifted the conflict narrative away from the “fight against terrorists” run by the Assad regime to the “defence of *Sayyida Zainab*” (Smyth 2015: 46–47). In turn, the strategic significance of the success of this narrative shift is that it was not really conducive to local conditions. To clarify, Busra al-Sham was home to a minority Shiite population only, and many of them professed to be Sunnis to avoid persecution. Hizbullah's presence in the area however has resulted in Shi'ites increasingly adopting sectarian identities. Notably, Hizbullah attracts recruits using martyrdom-themed posters, Party-insignia on uniforms, and the *Sayyida Zainab* narrative (Smyth 2015: 46–47).

Hizbullah successfully transferred its ideology beyond Lebanon as evidenced by the Hizbullah-led fighting cells which emerged in Syria staffed by Shi'ite and Alawite Syrians. These groups were useful security options for other Shi'ite entities. For example, Jaish al-Imam al-Mahdi al-Muqawama al-Watani al-Aqaidiya fi Suriya (Army of Imam al-Mahdi, the National Ideological Resistance in Syria) has been active in Aleppo and not only displays Hizbullah symbols and proclaims publicly its loyalty to Hassan Nasrallah, it also brings together Hizbullah's Intervention in Syria

Khamenei, Khomeini, and Bashar and Hafiz al-Assad to establish an holistic framework of Syrian and Iranian “resistance” (Schenker 2015).

Smyth (2015) in his report referred to this notion as the virtual “Hezbollahization of militias”, in which Hizbullah becomes the role model for resistance groups in the region.

The virtual Hezbollahization of militias now taking up many combat roles against ISIS by late 2014, around fifty Shiite militias had been announced, either emerging as popular committees or as more dedicated organizations. Many of these groups have been crafted as Iraq-based near duplicates of Hizbullah (Smyth 2015: 55).

Hizbullah had obtained this status after the withdrawal of the Israeli army from southern Lebanon in 2000, and after Hizbullah claimed victory in the 2006 war with Israel. That is why Hizbullah represents an interesting transnational group in the region.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated yet another case study of Hizbullah’s pragmatism vis-à-vis *maslaha* or interest. In this chapter, the Party’s intervention in the Syrian turmoil was examined for the way in which it had to adjust its rhetoric to justify its involvement in an unpopular cause and to attract recruits. The discussion primarily centred on the Party’s religious-political reasoning processes in different circumstances to achieve politically pragmatic outcomes, even if it went against its long-standing ideology for protecting the Shi’ite shrines. As such, it illustrated the application of Social Movement Theory by pointing to the importance of coordinated action to purposefully impact the political structures in need of protection or change (De la Porta and Diani 2006: 150-152). Indeed, the case of Hizbullah’s justification for fighting in Syria illustrates how the Party employed the religious narrative of protecting the *Sayyida Zainab* shrine as a necessity for its mainstream position in the fight of Western-backed *takfiri* groups. Even though this strategy has brought numerous accusations of hypocrisy, the Party’s decision to participate in the Syrian war confirms its socio-political position and the key elements of Social Movement theory to establish a collective good and confront one’s opponents. This was arguably inevitable due

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to the implications of losing its allies and the implications for Lebanon and Hizbullah if Syria were to be governed by a hostile Sunni government.

8 Conclusion

Even though nearly 30 years have passed since the end of the Lebanese civil war, the people of Lebanon still endure political and social segregation (Farha 2009: 83-86). This is particularly the case for domestic Shi'ite communities whose concentration in the outskirts of Beirut, in southern Lebanon, and in the Bekaa area meant that little attention has been given to them by successive Lebanese governments. The religious and ethnic persecution of Shi'ite communities in southern Lebanon during the Israeli occupation in 1973 and 1982 was compounded by their continuous neglect by the Lebanese government, due in part to the Shi'ite community's inability to make its case to these governments (Salamey 2014: 32-33). Founded as a resistance movement to the threat of Israel, Hizbullah's success in driving Israel out of southern Lebanon gained it widespread support among Lebanese Shi'ites, particularly (Khatib 2014: 105-111). In turn, this thesis argues that Hizbullah has subsequently sought to increase its political power based in Lebanon and its legitimacy as a regional actor – rather than as a domestic actor only – by mixing religiosity with politics to position itself as simultaneously the protector of Lebanon from the threat of Israel, and the guardian of Shi'ite values and traditions in the region more broadly.

Based on this assertion, the aim of this study was to adopt a multidisciplinary approach to examine the extent to which religion is apparent in Hizbullah's political rhetoric through an analysis of Nasrallah's speeches from 2000 to 2013.

Specifically, the multidisciplinary approach sought to include consideration of concepts and insights from the fields of security studies, terrorism studies, IR, and Social Movement Theory to ensure a wide-ranging investigation of the role and function of religion in Hizbullah's political strategy. In turn, this thesis benefited from such an approach as the process of drawing on multiple perspectives enabled a deeper understanding of the relationship between religion and the ideational, military, social, and cultural aspects of Nasrallah's speeches. In turn, this facilitated the emergence and discussion of insightful findings on the way, and extent to which, Hizbullah's use of religion served both its domestic political agenda and justified its involvement in regional conflicts.

Indeed, the examination in this thesis was framed by the hypothesis that Hizbullah employs religion and religious tools to better pursue its political goals. The argument developed throughout this thesis then focused primarily on the Party's uses of *ijtihad* and *fatwa* as religious tools to "interpret" Islamic principles and significant religious events in case specific situations to serve both religious objectives and politically pragmatic outcomes. As such, the key consideration was to investigate how the Party exploits religious tools to legitimise or justify its decisions and action taking.

Using an exploratory study design, 101 speeches and interviews by Nasrallah from 2000 to 2013 were subjected to a content analysis to determine the setting and frequency of references to religion in Hizbullah's political rhetoric during this period of the Party's emergence as a political presence in Lebanon. The interpretation and discussion of the main findings to emerge from the content

analysis was informed through references to secondary resources such as journals articles, newspaper articles, and other relevant literature in the field.

The need for this research investigation emerged from the gap in our understanding of Hizbullah's use of religious belief structures as tools to pursue its political objectives. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Three, a review of the Social Sciences literature revealed the research opportunities for further exploration of the current position of religion in both security studies and terrorism studies as it applies to regional politics in the Middle East broadly and the role played by non-state actors in regional alliances more specifically. The significance of this gap and the subsequent importance of this research study is in turn evidenced in Hizbullah's ongoing efforts to reconfigure its political position via the reinterpretation of existing religious sources in response to domestic and regional events. Indeed, the main consideration throughout this thesis is the extent to which the intermixing of religiosity and politics by Hizbullah is intended to provide it with a platform from which to sustain its domestic legitimacy as a force against the threat from Israel and its regional legitimacy as a protector of the rights, values and religious artefacts of Shi'ite Muslims more broadly. As such, the analysis of Nasrallah's speeches is contextualised within Hizbullah's transformation from resistance movement to political party, and from domestic protector to regional actor; that is, in part, a result of the Party's transition toward political pragmatism.

Important insights were gained through this study into Hizbullah's use of religion in its rhetoric – via speeches by, and interviews with, its leader, Nasrallah

– as part of an overarching political strategy. Firstly, examination of Hizbullah’s political rhetoric within the framework of its representation as a religious non-state actor revealed the Party’s consistent and considered use of religious tools to serve its political agenda, which this thesis argued was to maintain hegemony and influence over the Shi’ite community (Al-Agha 2011: 48-49). A particularly salient case in point to emerge from the analysis was Hizbullah’s use of the rhetoric of Karbala (*Ashoura* commemoration) which recalls the martyrdom of their Imam who died in an epic battle, centuries ago. This thesis argued that religious rhetoric of this nature; namely, allusions to Shi’ite religious traditions and the collective grievances of Shi’ites – was integral to Hizbullah’s political agenda to shape and exploit the Shi’ite identity to serve its political interests. By linking the principles and beliefs associated with Karbala and martyrdom to the present-day context of domestic politics and (later on) regional conflicts, Hizbullah sought to provide explanation and justification for what has been widely regarded as self-serving decision making and action taking (Khatib et al. 2014: 53-55). As such, the results of the data analysis undertaken in this study demonstrate why the rhetoric and actions of Hizbullah should be regarded as a good starting point to better understand the role of religion in the Party’s political strategy.

Secondly, this thesis asserted that Hizbullah’s use of religious tools such as *taklif shari*, *ijtihad*, and *fatwa* provide a clear demonstration of the Party’s ability to be flexible in its interpretation of Islamic principles and values to serve its strategic interests. Based on the results of the content analysis of Nasrallah’s speeches, a key element in Hizbullah’s transition towards political moderation (pragmatism)

and the Party's more "flexible" stance on regional conflicts is its use of religious tools – *ijtihad*, *taklif shari* and *fatwa*. Such tools enable the Party to take decisions and to implement actions to serve their domestic and regional position and objectives.

Therefore, this thesis concluded that Hizbullah is acting as a rational non-state group and thus should not simply be deemed as a guerrilla or terrorist organisation. Hence in order to offer a comprehensive understanding of the Party it should be examined as a rational non-state actor and more than just a military organisation.

To further illustrate this point, a case study analysis of Hizbullah's involvement in the Syrian conflict was provided. The analysis revealed the extent of the links between religiosity and politics in the rhetoric by Hizbullah to justify its involvement in Syria. Specifically, it highlighted the appropriation by the Party of the *takfiris* as the enemy of not only Shi'ites, but of all Muslims; while balancing this appropriation against the more Shi'ite-centred argument for the need to protect the *Sayyida Zainab* shrine. In combining the threat to Lebanon generally with the threat to Shi'ites traditions more specifically, the role of religion in Hizbullah's pragmatic approach to political decision making and action taking was exposed. Namely, to use religion as a tool – specifically *taklif shari* to reason that "necessity permits what is prohibited" – to protect the Party's political base in Lebanon as a result of its involvement in Syria.

The decision making and action taking by Hizbullah in relation to domestic (Lebanese) politics and regional conflicts is unquestionably an important and

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developing point of interest in the field of IR. The changing and often volatile nature of politics in the region, and Hizbullah's emergent propensity to be "flexible" in its political agenda provide a rich context for from which to explore the increasingly pragmatic aspects of the Party's decision making. Each of the chapters included in this thesis contribute to our understanding of the role of religion in politics as contextualised in the analysis of Hizbullah in Lebanon. Chapter 1, for example, provided relevant historical background details on the emergence of Hizbullah in Lebanon to frame the "religious" nature of the Party's domestic power base. Chapter 2 sought to contextualise Hizbullah as a religious non-state actor in the Middle East from a multidisciplinary perspective; namely security studies, terrorism studies, Social Movement Theory, and current IR theory. It provided a review of the literature on the role of religion in international politics as positioned in these fields and established the links made in the literature with Hizbullah's ideology, identity, and use of religion as a political tool. Chapter 3 further contributed to the investigation of the research question and hypothesis by identifying the religious tools of focus (i.e. *taklif shari*, *ijtihad*, and *fatwa*) and explaining the significance of their relationship to politics in the Middle East. Importantly, initial links were established between Hizbullah's use of these tools and the Party's transition towards more politically pragmatic outcomes. Chapter 4 then provided a more detailed discussion of Hizbullah's use of *taklif shari* and *ijtihad* as part of its evolution towards more politically pragmatic action taking specifically. It was here that the mixture of religiosity and politics in Hizbullah's strategic direction was explored in depth through a detailed discussion of the main themes and issues to emerge in the

literature on this topic. Chapter 5 then presented the results of the content analysis of Nasrallah's speeches from 2000 to 2013. The provision and discussion of quantitative data (statistics) to demonstrate the extent to which religion is a feature of Hizbullah's political rhetoric, along the attempts to explain the political implications and/or outcomes of the Party's use of religion, then further established the links between Hizbullah's use of religion and politically pragmatic position taking on domestic and regional affairs. Lastly, as discussed above, Chapter 6 provided a case study example of the politics-religion-pragmatism nexus in Hizbullah's political strategy.

Based on this comprehensive analysis of Hizbullah's use of religion to achieve its political and resistance agendas from a multidisciplinary perspective, the main argument developed in this thesis that Hizbullah is a rational non-state group and more than just a guerrilla or terrorist organization was supported on various grounds. Specifically, the Party's use of religion (as evidenced in Nasrallah's speeches) primarily to pursue a pragmatic (rather than destabilising) approach to its political and resistance action-taking was well established. In addition, the Party's use of religion was shown to facilitate a key domestic agenda to support the marginalised Shi'ite community in Lebanon as well as the Shia Islamic identity in the region. Lastly, it alluded to the increasing recognition in IR and social mobilisation theories of the rational use of religious rhetoric or instruments by non-state actors to justify actions or to mobilise populations to facilitate social change.

This investigation of the extent to which religion is embedded in the Party's rhetoric as part of its political strategy is both timely and important. It helps to shed light on the Party's use of religion to facilitate politically pragmatic outcomes in the face of changing socio-political conditions, as well as to consolidate its standing among Lebanese Shi'ites particularly. Such insights can in turn contribute to our developing understanding of the role of religion in contemporary IR and to the tools and processes used by religious non-state actor groups such as Hizbullah to secure their legitimacy in domestic and regional politics.

8.1.1 Study limitations

Notwithstanding the new insights into the extent and role of religion in the politics of Hizbullah provided by the findings in this study, it is important to consider these findings in relation to the study's limitations. Gaining access to information on Hizbullah's decision making processes and rationales is extremely difficult given its confidential nature. As a result, this researcher had to rely on authors who claim to have access to such information to inform the discussion of the data analysis results. In addition, because Hizbullah has a tendency to not disclose its true political intentions, it is incumbent upon researchers and authors to consider that the information in Hizbullah-provided sources may not be fully reliable. Lastly, at the time of writing this thesis Hizbullah was in the throes of a significant shift in its political platform; most clearly demonstrated in the Party's intervention in Syria. Therefore, the discussion in this thesis of the implications of Hizbullah's use of religion was

reliant on what was considered as the most up-to-date information on Lebanese domestic politics and the status of Hizbullah both domestically and regionally.

8.1.2 Future research

The case of Hizbullah can be considered as an addition to the guerrilla movements that have successfully transformed into political parties within states' political systems and in some cases, come to dominate those states' post-independence political systems. Hizbullah is a multi-faceted organisation that has thrived on its social networks, resistance operations, weak central government, religious identity, and regional alliances. Furthermore, events such as the September 11 2001 attacks on the US and the subsequent declaration of the War on Terror, the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East, the Arab Spring, and the emergent phenomenon of ISIS have all raised new questions about the influence of religion in regional politics. In turn, while it was worthwhile to explore the role played by religion in the Party's transformation towards political pragmatism in Lebanese politics, our academic understanding of the role of religion in politics would greatly benefit from a study of the Party's shifting political-religious identity.

Future research might also be focussed on a comparative study of Hizbullah and other political factions in Lebanon such as the Phalanges or the Party's relationship with Iran. The ideological commitment of Hizbullah to *Welayet al-Faqih* helps identify the Party's future objectives and regional course of action. Hence, further research studies of the Party's regional alliances structures and their implications for domestic politics would contribute valuable academic

insights into the key factors shaping perceptions of the legitimacy of non-state actors at the domestic and regional level.

Lastly, future research on the implications of Hizbullah as a non-state actor in the Middle East would also benefit from adopting a multidisciplinary approach. As this study hoped to demonstrate, research which aims to apply concepts and insights from multiple disciplines requires the researcher to consider the research topic from different perspectives and in relation to different research objectives (Guevas et al. 2012: 58). As such, a coordinated effort by researchers to draw on disciplines from complementary fields increases the potential to provide a strong foundation on which to generate new and often unique insights into the research phenomenon of interest.

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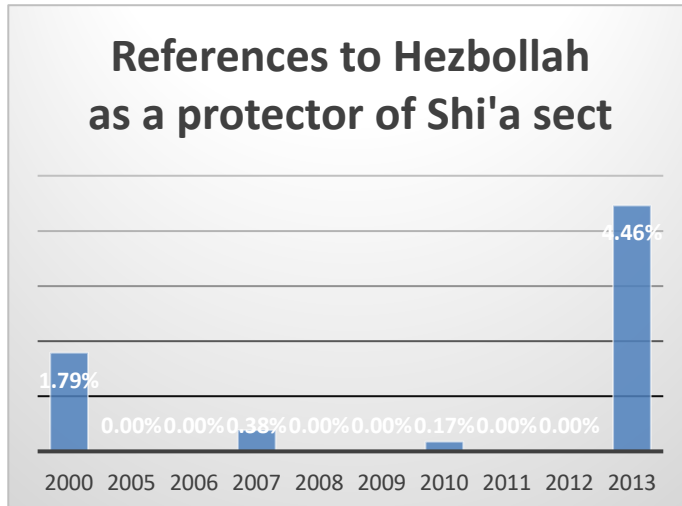
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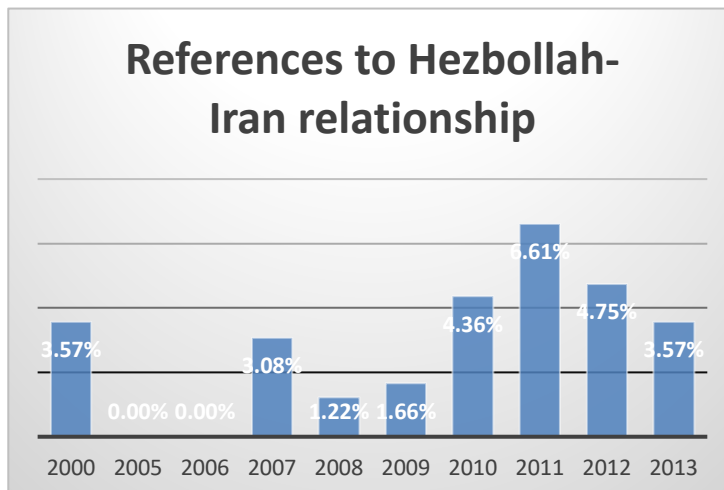
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10 Appendixes

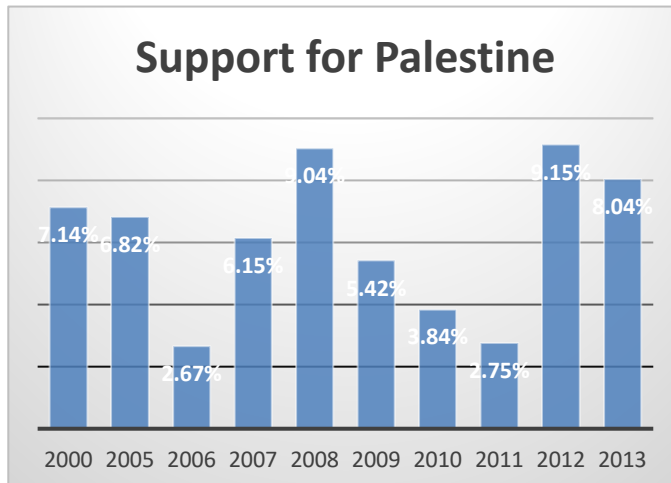
10.1 Charts 1a, b, c, d



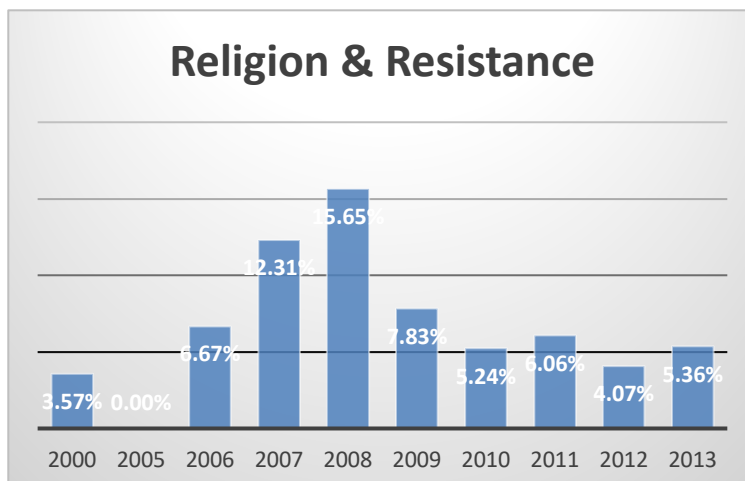
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Source: Author's analysis of Nasrallah's speeches

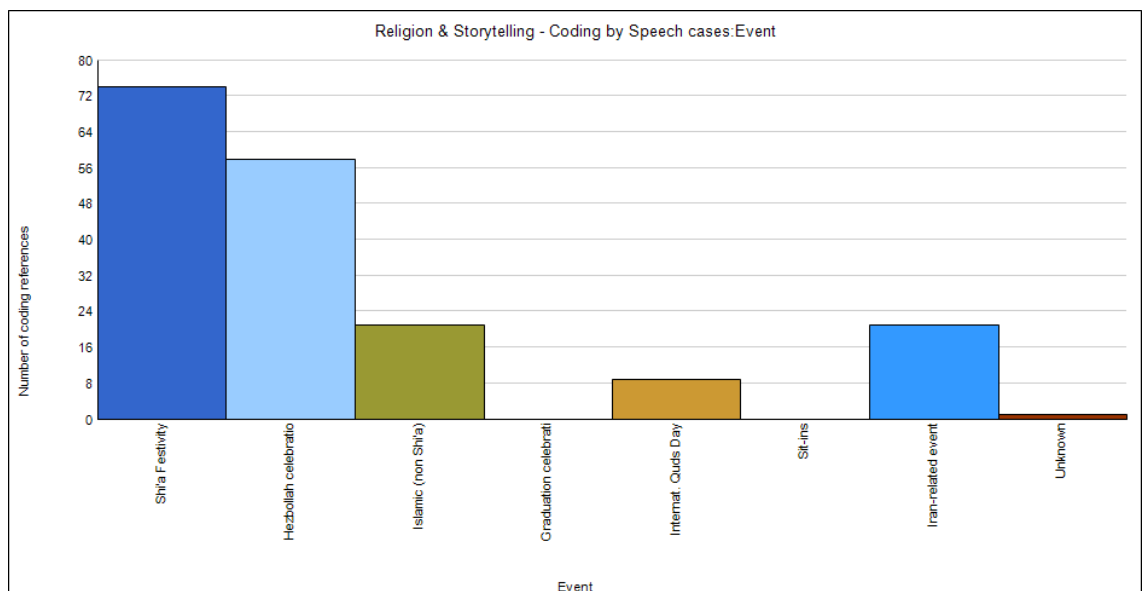


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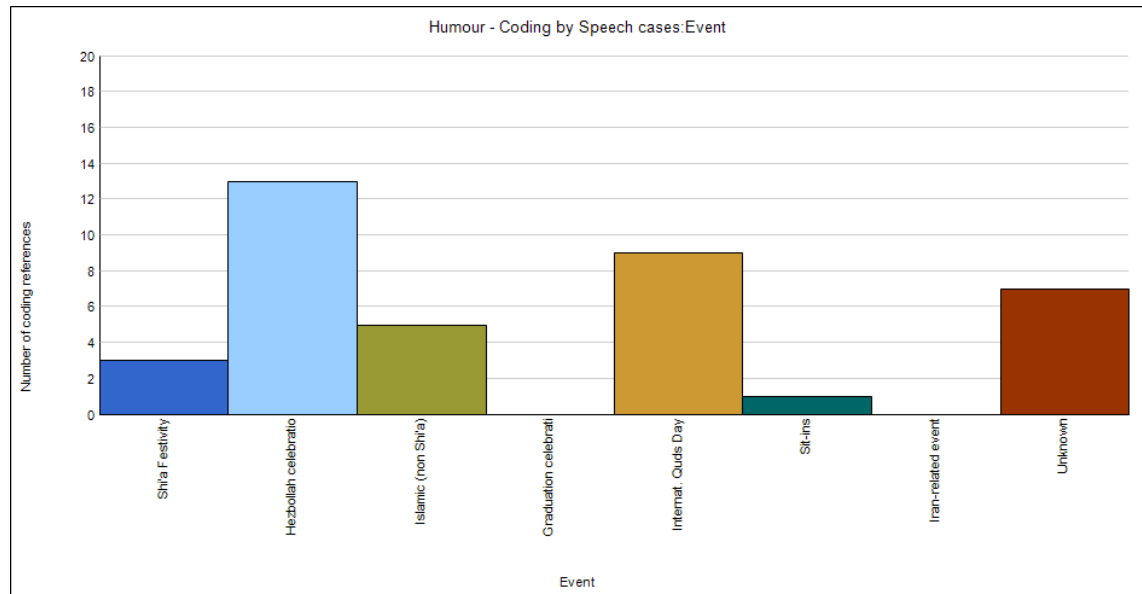
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10.2 Chart 2



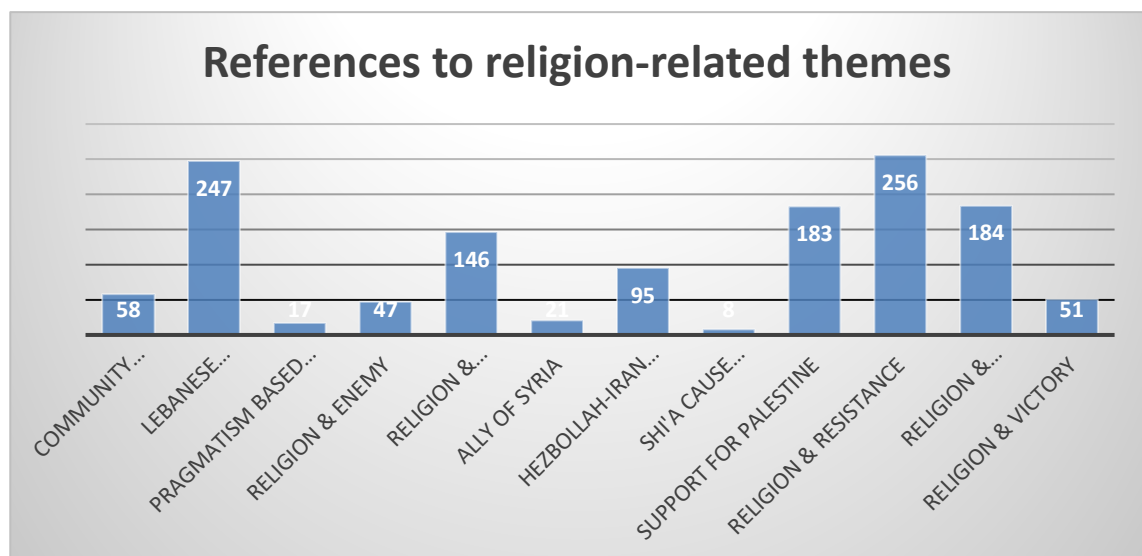
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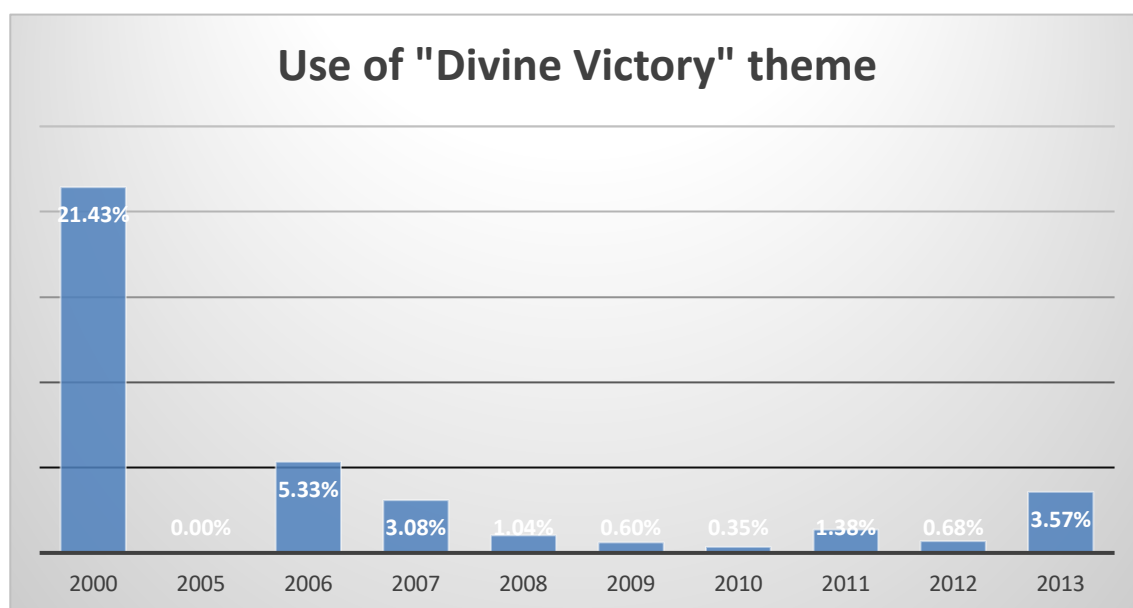
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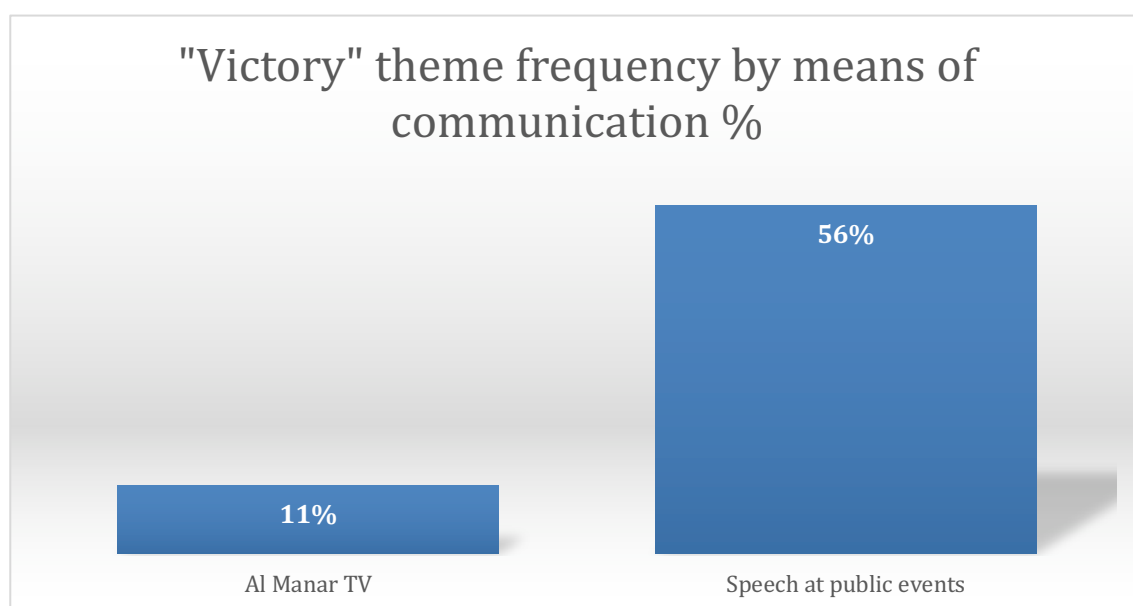
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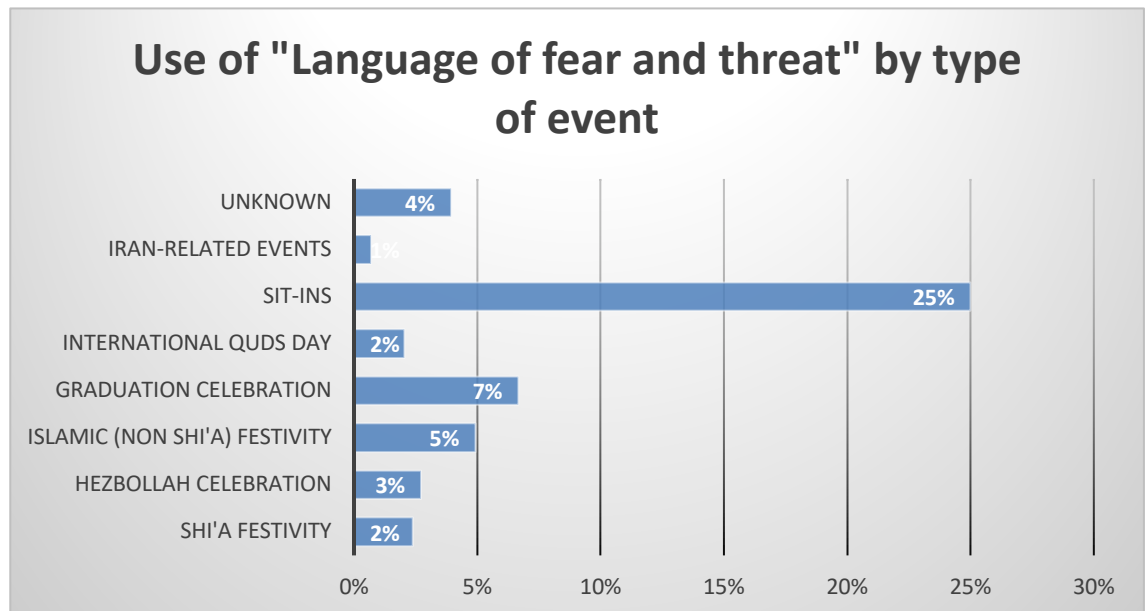
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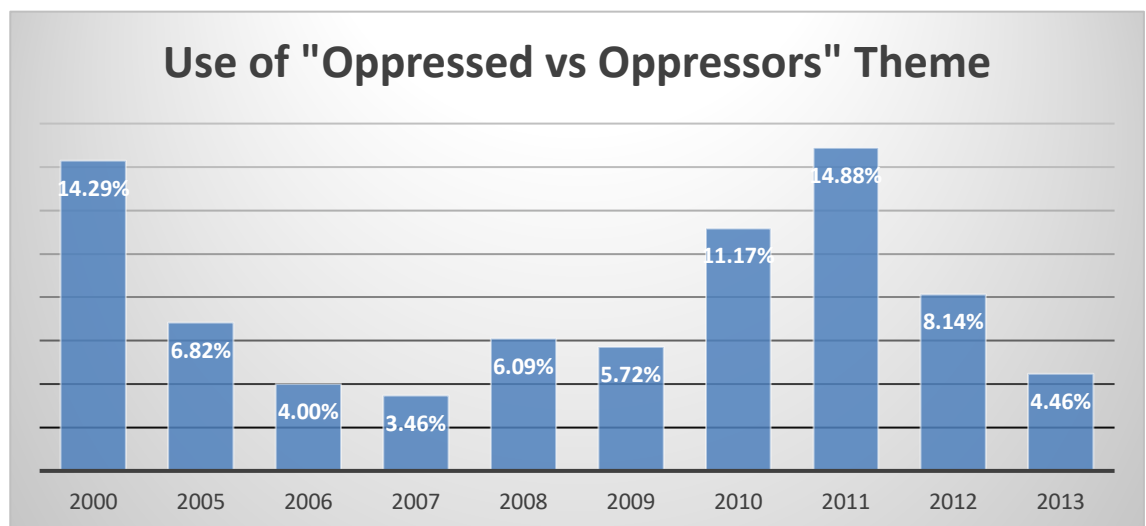
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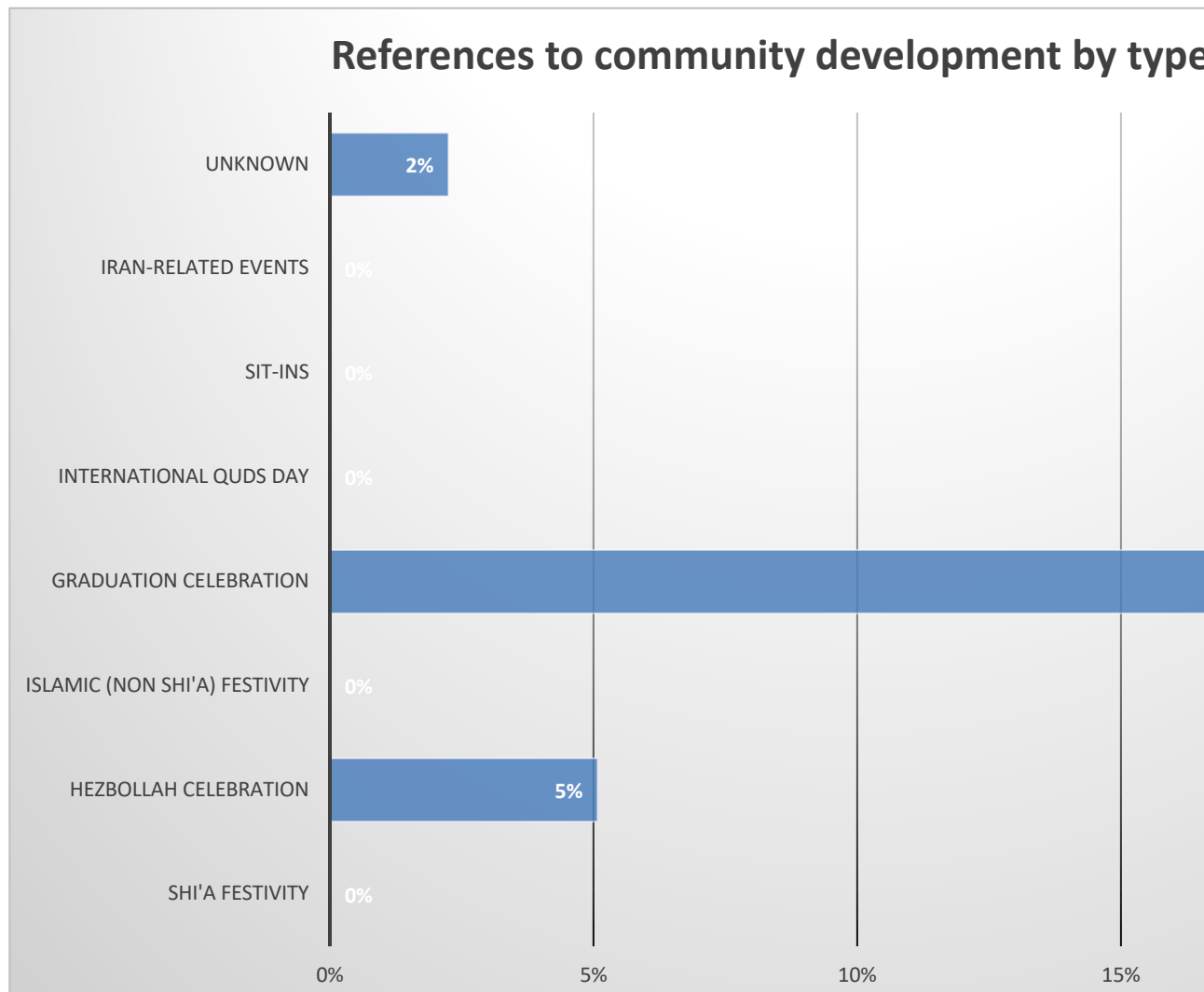
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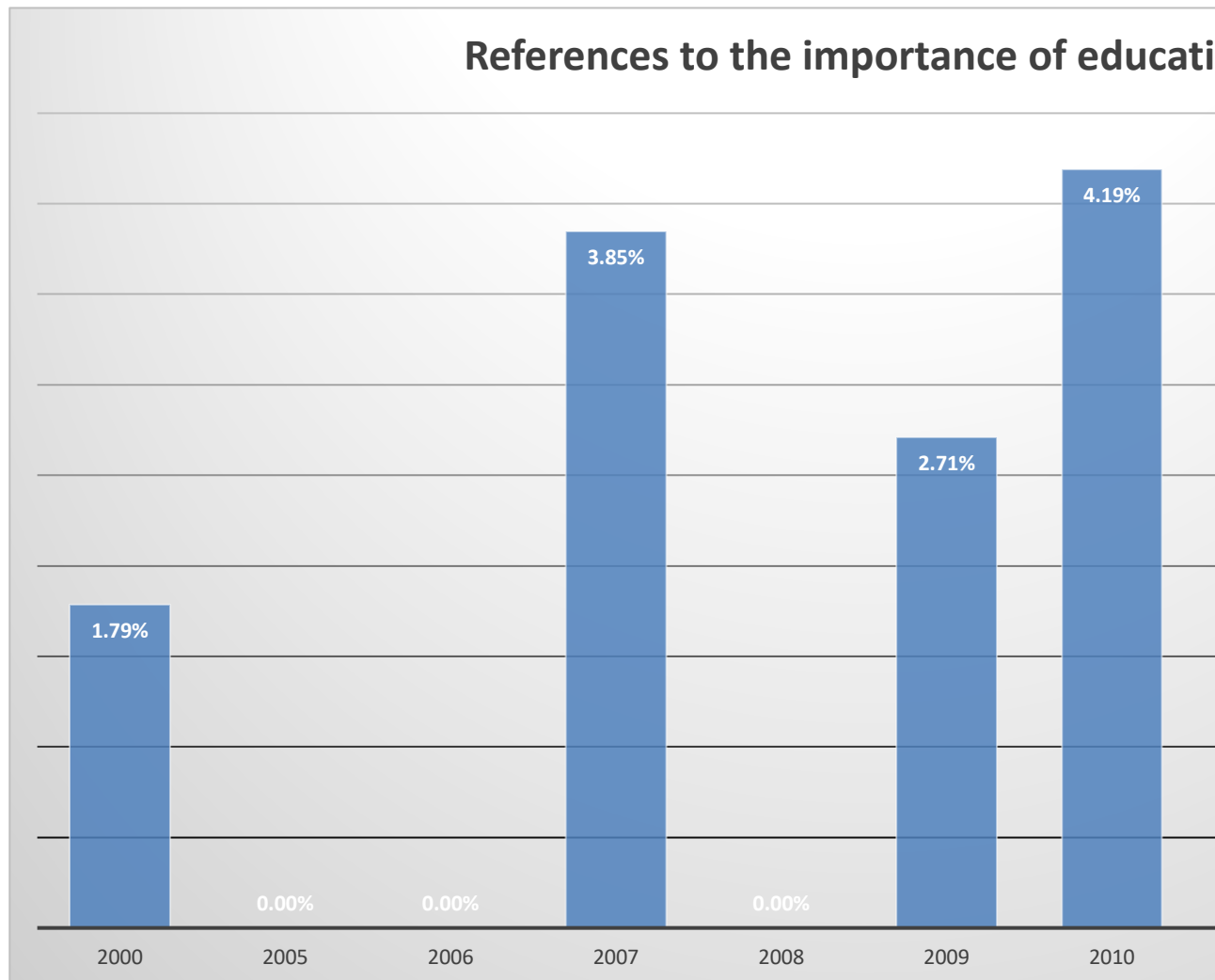
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10.9 Chart 9



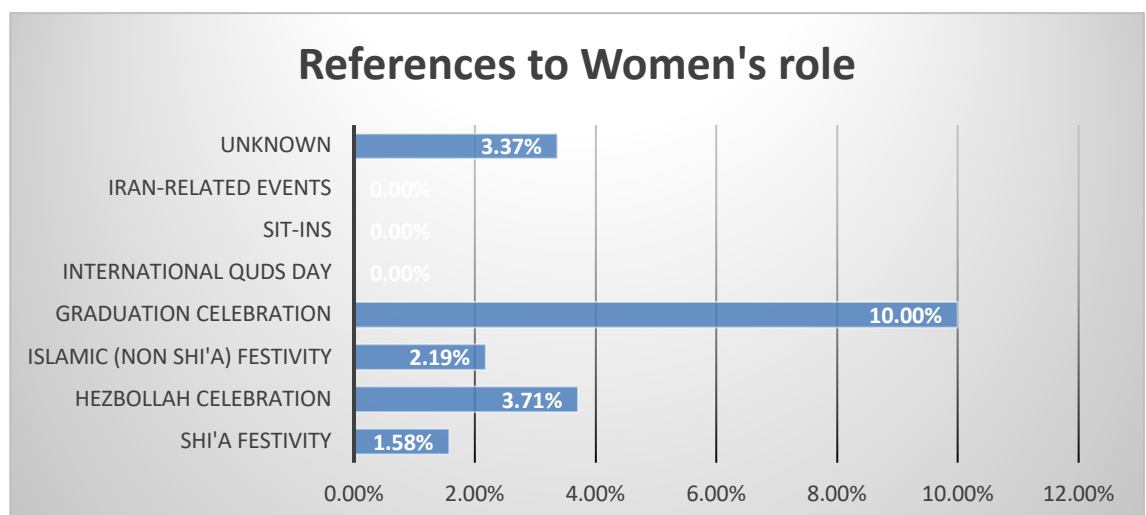
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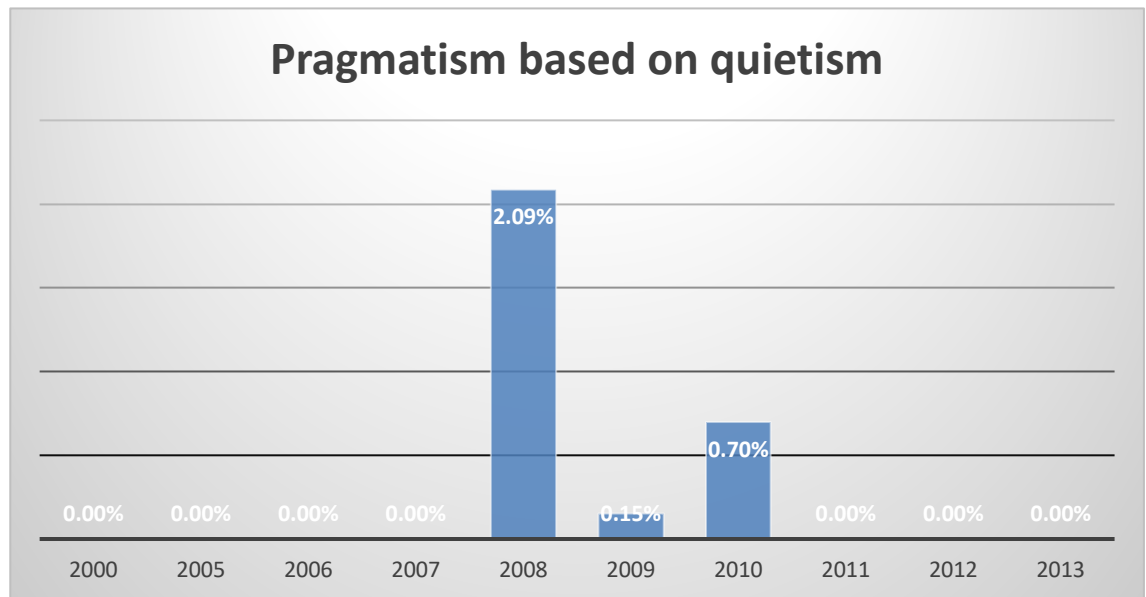
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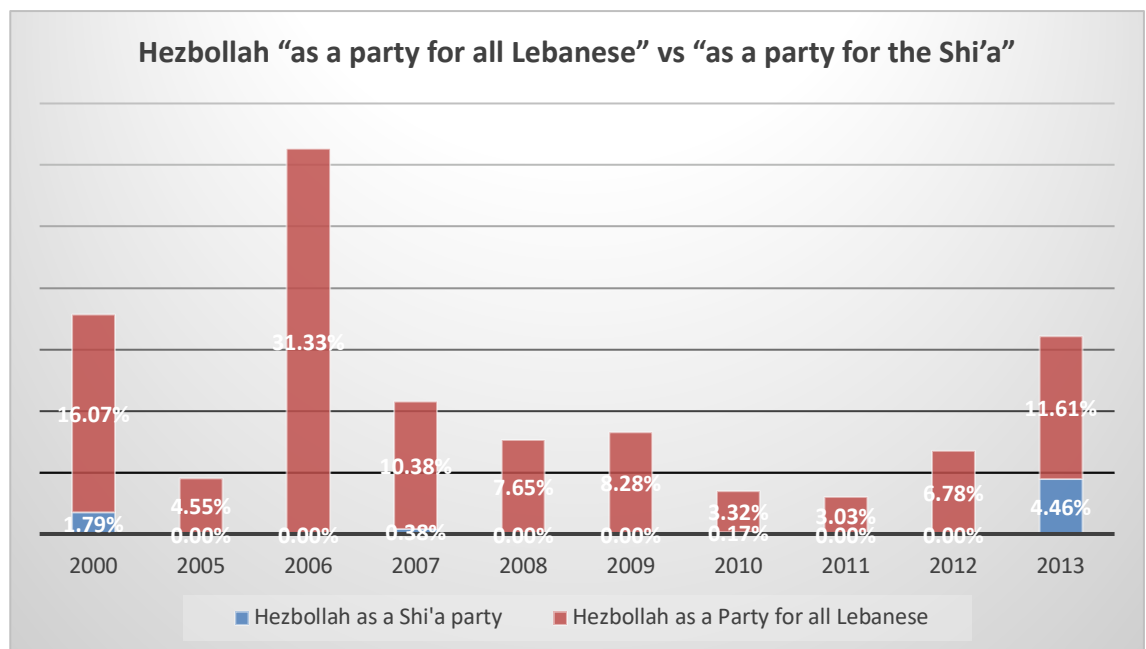
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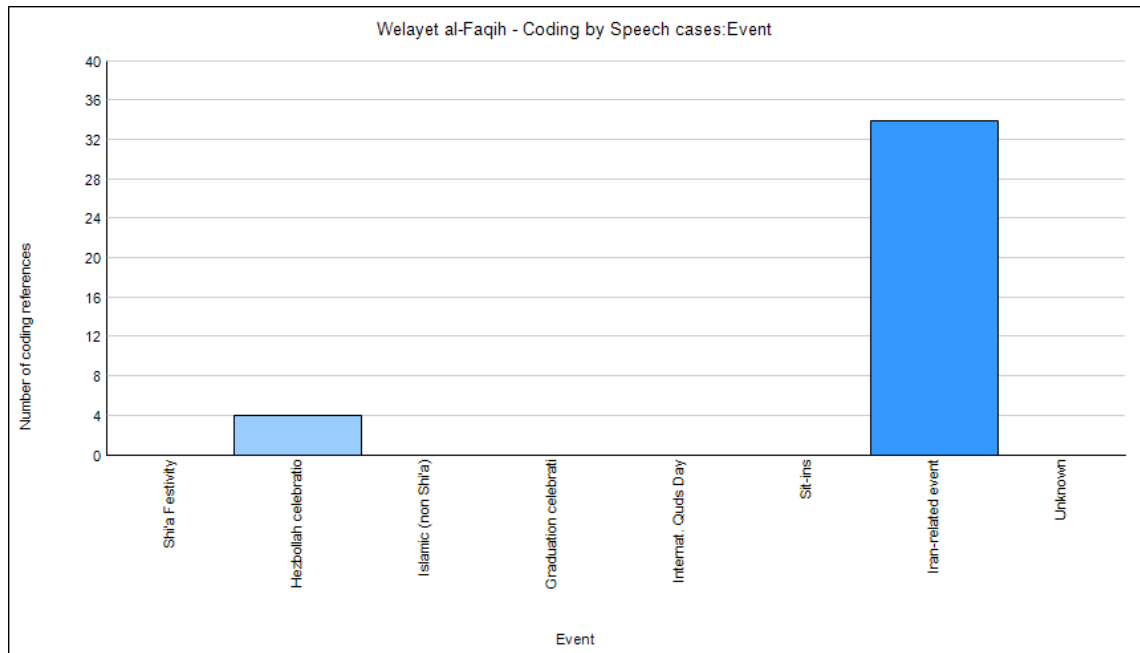
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10.13 Chart 13



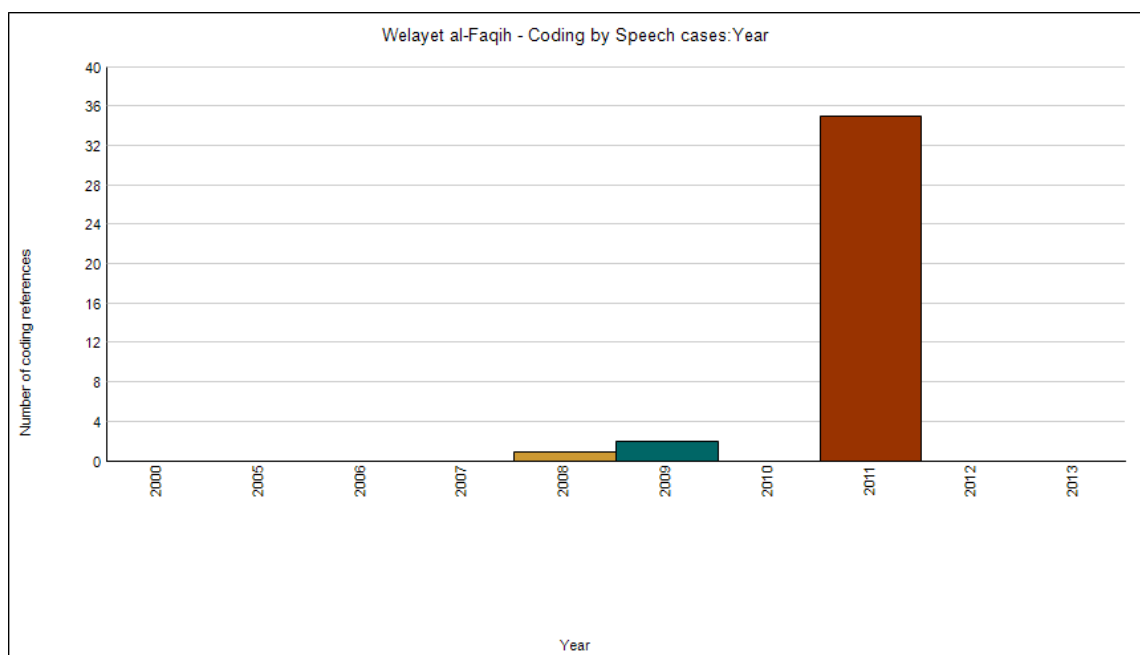
Source: Author's analysis of Nasrallah's speeches

10.14 Chart 14



Source: Author's analysis of Nasrallah's speeches

10.15 Chart 15



Source: Author's analysis of Nasrallah's speeches