Hizballah in Syria: The Limits of the Democracy/Moderation Paradigm

*Dara CONDUIT**

Abstract
Hizballah is a popular case study for those seeking to understand democratic transformations in radical groups, although there has never been consensus on whether Hizballah has genuinely transformed. Although Hizballah appeared committed to parliamentary politics between 1992 and 2008, the group's behaviour in the lead up to the 2008 Doha Agreement and its intervention in Syria in 2013 suggest that democracy has failed to fully 'tame' Hizballah. This article applies Schwedler's model of democratic moderation to Hizballah, showing that there was evidence of a number of limitations in Hizballah's transition long before 2008.

Keywords: Hizballah, Hezbollah, Islamism, Islam and Democracy, Lebanon, Syrian Conflict, Doha Agreement, Syria, Democratisation

Suriye'de Hizbullah: Demokrasinin Sınırları/Ilımlılaştırma Paradigma

Özet
Hizbullah'ın gerçekten dönüştüğü konusunda bir fikir birliği olmamasına rağmen, radikal gruplarda demokratik dönüşümleri anlamak isteyenler için Hizbullah sıklıkla başvurulan bir vaka çalışmasıdır. Hizbullah 1992 ve 2008 yılları arasında parlamenter siyasete bağlı bir görüntü sergilemesine rağmen, 2008 Doha Anlaşması'na giden süreçte ve 2013'de Suriye müdahalesindeki davranışı göstermektedir ki demokrasi Hizbullah'ı uysallaştırmakta başarısız olmuştur. Bu makale Schwedler'in demokratik ılımlılık modelini Hizbullah'a uygular ve 2008'den çok önce Hizbullah'ın dönüşümünün sınırlarını

**** PhD candidate, School of Social Sciences, Monash University, Australia***

Dara Conduit, Hizballah in Syria: The Limits of the Democracy/Moderation Paradigm,
Ortadoğu Etütleri, Volume 5, No 2, January 2014, pp.81-114.

ortaya koyan bir dizi kanıt olduğunu gösterir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hizbullah, İslam, İslam ve Demokrasi, Lübnan, Suriye Sorunu, Doha Anlaşması, Suriye, Demokratikleşme

حزب الله فى سوريا:حدود الديمقراطية/نموذج الإعتدال

ملخص

يعد حزب الله بمثابة حالة دراسية رائجة فى أوساط الباحثين الساعين لفهم التحولات الديمقراطية داخل الجماعات الراديكالية، فعلي الرغم من أنه لم يكن هناك إجماع أبداً حول مسألة تدل علي إن كان حزب الله قد مر بتحول حقيقى وفعلى ام لا. وعلى الرغم من ان حزب الله قد بدى ملتزماً بالسياسة البرلمانية ما بين العامين ١٩٩٢ و٢٠٠٨ ، فإن سلوك جماعة حزب الله فى الفترة الاخيرة تجاه اتفاقية الدوحة ،وتدخلها فى سوريا فى عام ٢٠١٣ يظهر أن الديمقراطية التي اتبعها حزب الله فى «كبح جماح»قد فشلت .

تطبق هذه الدراسة نموذج «شويلدر» للإعتدال على حالة حزب الله، مبرزة أن هناك ثمة شواهد تدل على وجود عدد من القيود ادت الي تحويل مسيرة حزب الله سابقة عام ٢٠٠٨ بوقت طويل.

كلمات مفتاحية: حزب الله ، الإسلام السياسى، الإسلام والديمقراطية، لبنان، الصراع السورى، اتفاقية الدوحة، سوريا، الدمقرطة.

Introduction

Hizballah has participated in elections in Lebanon since 1992, making it a popular case study for those seeking to understand democratic transformations in radical groups. Emerging as a militant group during Lebanon's civil war, Hizballah has engaged in democracy since the establishment of Lebanon's fragile peace. However, the sincerity of Hizballah's transition has frequently been questioned, with Ezani and Kramer arguing that Hizballah merely uses Lebanon's democratic system to further its own non-democratic, Islamist and violent agenda.[1] Norton and Palmer-Harik are more circumspect, pointing to a fundamental change in the group since its democratic engagement.[2] Indeed, Hizballah had appeared committed to parliamentary politics, having consistently acted in a responsible and rational manner in the Lebanese political arena up until 2008. However, the group's behaviour in the lead up to the Doha Agreement in 2008 and its intervention in Syria in 2013 may provide a fatal challenge to the moderation argument, suggesting that democracy has failed to fully 'tame' Hizballah. Now that the group has demonstrated a renewed proclivity for violence in the pursuit of its own survival, we can see that it never fully submitted itself to democratic practice.

This article will ask whether previous conclusions about Hizballah's transformation have been invalidated by the group's behaviour in 2008 and its involvement the Syrian uprising. It is important to acknowledge that Hizballah did - at least for a period - appear to have been transformed. Earlier analyses of the group have been narrative-based and rarely use democratic transition frameworks. In contrast, this article will assess Hizballah's transition against Schwedler's criteria for democratic moderation, to provide an explanation for why the group, although ostensibly moderated, has reverted to violence.[3] It will be shown that there were a number of limitations of Hizballah's transition long before 2008. This ensured

1 E. Ezani, "Hezbollah's strategy of "walking on the edge": Between political game and political violence", *Studies Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 35 No.11, 2012.; M. Kramer, "Hizbullah: The Calculus of Jihad" in M. Marty & R. Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalisms and the State,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

2 A. Norton, "Hizballah: From Radicalism to Pragmatism*?", Middle East Policy*, Vol. 5No. 12, 1998. ; J. Harik, *Hezbollah: The changing face of terrorism*, (New York, IB Tauris, 2005).

3 J. Schwedler, *Faith in moderation: Islamist parties in Jordan and Yemen*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

that it was only a matter of time before Hizballah's earlier more-violent character resurfaced, which is now being seen in the Syrian conflict.

Perspectives on Radicalism and Democratic Participation

The relationship between Islamists and democracy has been heavily debated over the past two decades, with a particular focus on whether democracy is able to "moderate" radical groups. Huntington suggests that the very act of participation invokes a "democratic bargain," whereby radical groups reject violence and recognise the key institutions of state in exchange for a slice of political power.[4] Meanwhile, Blondel and Ottaway argue that groups operating in democracies are forced to appeal to as broad a constituency as possible in an effort to gain the maximum parliamentary power, inevitably leading groups to advocate "middle ground" policies.[5] Kirchheimer agrees that policies are often watered-down to avoid alienating voters and maximise electoral rewards.[6] In contrast, Snow et al argue that the mechanisms of moderation begin post-democratic engagement, once players in a democratic system learn the "rules of the game" and submit themselves to regular electoral cycles.[7] Karakatsanis builds on this argument, arguing that strategic failures also prompt groups to make tactical improvements, while memories of past-hardships can create a greater urgency inside groups to remedy issues within the confines of democracy.[8]

This article will use Schwedler's model of democratic moderation to assess the factors that have promoted and constrained Hizballah's democratic transition. Schwedler's observations of the Islamic Action Front in Jordan and Islah in Yemen add considerable nuance to the field of literature, as she argued that democratic institutions alone are not enough to constrain radical behaviour. Instead, she

4 S. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late-Twentieth Century,* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

5 J. Blondel, *Political parties: a genuine case for discontent?,* (London: Wildwood House, 1978); M. Ottoway. "Islamists and democracy: Keep the faith", *The New Republic,* 6 June 2005.

6 O. Kirchheimer, "Transformation of Party Systems" in J. Lapalombara & M. Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

7 D. Snow, E. Rochford, S. Worden & R Benford, "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 51 No. 4, 1986.

8 N. Karakatsanis "Political Learning as a Catalyst of Moderation: Lessons from Democratic Consolidation in Greece", *Democratization*, Vol. 15 No. 2, 2008.

put forward a three-factor process-based model, arguing that that "political opportunity structures", "internal group structure" and the "boundaries of justifiable action" are the key determinants of a democracy's ability to prompt genuine change within a group.[9] According to Schwedler, a state's Political Opportunity Structures are important because they inform the cost/benefit analysis that groups undertake when considering democratic engagement. Some political systems offer more incentives than others to encourage demilitarisation. Schwedler also considers Internal Group Structure to be a crucial indicator of a group's proclivity to moderation, as groups with greater levels of internal democracy are likely to undergo leadership changes and hold pluralistic debates, helping them morph to reflect the external democratic environment. Finally, the Boundaries of Justifiable Action are also critical, as they provide the margins within which a group can credibly change its political goals. Groups with rigid anti-system goals may find it difficult to justify participation without compromising their support base.[10] Schwedler argues that the interaction between these two structural factors and single ideational factor gives a key indication of a group's potential for moderation.

Schwedler's contribution to the democracy/moderation debate is important because it offers a theoretical model from which democratic environments and transitions can be assessed, which is unique for a field largely dominated by case-specific models and narratives. This article will analyse Hizballah's transition through the prism of Political Opportunity Structures, Internal Group Structures and the Boundaries of Justifiable Action to garner a fuller understanding of the group's transition.

Hizballah's transition to democratic participation

Hizballah emerged soon after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon with backing from Iran and Syria, and quickly became popular among Lebanon's Shi'a. Hizballah was renowned for its use of violence against Israeli, international and communal targets, including its involvement in the kidnapping of foreigners in Lebanon during

9 J. Schwedler, *Faith in moderation: Islamist parties in Jordan and Yemen*, p. 24.

10 Ibid.

the late 1980s.[11] In 1985, the group released its manifesto, calling for Lebanon to become an Islamic state based on the *velayat e-faqih* model popularised in Iran during the 1979 revolution.[12] Hizballah's methods and ideology gained popular support amongst the Shi'a community as a movement that sought to remedy their status as Lebanon's underclass.

The Lebanese civil war ended in 1989 with the signing of the Ta'if Accords.[13] The Accords marked a watershed in Lebanese history, restructuring the political system, disarming militias, and signalling the establishment of a fragile peace.[14] This had major ramifications for Hizballah, whose charter for an Islamic state was no longer sustainable, and required it to find another avenue through which to garner popular support.[15] In addition, Hizballah's international-backers, Iran and Syria, favoured Hizballah's acquiescence to democracy, particularly as Syria was guaranteed its own role in post-war Lebanon with the Accords acknowledging Syria's "special relationship" with Lebanon.[16] As a result, democratic participation appeared to be the best way for Hizballah to secure ongoing relevance. Hizballah therefore nominated candidates for the 1992 elections, winning all eight seats it contested. Its allies elected on the joint-Hizballah electoral list captured a further four seats, making the Hizballah bloc the largest in the Lebanese Parliament.

Political Opportunity Structures

The Ta'if Accords offered Hizballah a number of 'carrots' and deterrents that determined its participation in Lebanon's formal political

11 M. Ranstorp, *Hizb 'Allah in Lebanon: The politics of the Western Hostage Crisis*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

12 Hizballah committed itself to *Velayat e-faqih* in its open letter of 1985, available in: J. Alagha, *Hizbullah's documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), p. 40.

13 A. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007).

14 J. Sankari, *Fadlallah : the making of a radical Shi'ite leader*, (London: Saqi, 2005).

15 A. Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004).

16 "The Taif Agreement," United Nations. http://www.un.int/wcm/webdav/site/lebanon/shared/documents/Constitution/The%20Taif%20Agreement%20%28English%20Version%29%20.pdf (Accessed 30 June 2013).p. 8. ; According to Shanahan, the new Iranian President Rafsanjani held a meeting with Hizballah's leaders in Tehran in 1989 to articulate Iran's desire to re-integrate with the US and distance itself from its militias. See: R. Shanahan, *Radical Islamist groups in the modern age: A case study of Hizbullah*, (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Institute, 2003). ; Sankari notes Iran and Syria's joint support of Hizballah's participation in the Lebanese parliamentary system. See: J. Sankari, *Fadlallah: the making of a radical Shi'ite leader*.

system. According to Schwedler, 'the very structure of state institutions renders certain forms of political organization and contestation more effective than others.'[17] As mentioned above, Hizballah very much appeared to have embraced the incentives, becoming an integral part of the Lebanese parliamentary process from the outset.

The Accords made minor adjustments to the Lebanese political system and committed Lebanon's political elite to gradually abolishing the Confessional System, a compromise sufficient for Hizballah members to support participation in the democratic process. The Confessional System had been in place since the 1930s, and allocated political posts and parliamentary seats to Lebanon's main religious groups according to long-outdated proportional quotas. In return for participation, Hizballah could access the resources of parliament to remedy the Shi'a's plight, while working politically to improve their proportional allocation. Moreover, participation enabled Hizballah to maintain its resistance against Israel, as specified in the Ta'if Accords.[18] In return, it would be forced to moderate its ideological outlook (to maximise its chances of being elected), recognise the institutions of the state, and pour time and resources into maintaining public offices, formulating platforms and campaigning in elections. These factors could all be considered distractions from Hizballah's core aims.

Once inside the Lebanese electoral system, however, there were a number of factors providing both constraints and opportunities for moderation. The Lebanese electoral system has in-built features that promote policy moderation. Having been designed with Lebanon's fractious religious divides in mind, Lebanon's list-based electoral system requires candidates and parties to form cross-religious coalitions to be elected.[19] The system is intended to promote inter-religious coordination and deter parties from pursuing policies that negatively impact other groups. Radical and anti-status quo can-

17 J. Schwedler, *Faith in moderation: Islamist parties in Jordan and Yemen*, p. 79.

18 This can be found in Section 3 of the Ta'if Agreement, available at: "The Taif Agreement," United Nations. http://www.un.int/wcm/webdav/site/lebanon/shared/documents/Constitution/The%20Taif%20Agreement%20%28English%20Version%29%20.pdf (Accessed 30 June 2013). p. 8.

19 A. Lijphart, "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies", *Journal of Democracy,* Vol. 15 No. 2, 2004.

didates often find it impossible to be elected.[20] Indeed, Hizballah formed coalitions with Lebanese political groups of all stripes, leading to a further attenuation of its formerly-radical policies.[21] Hizballah has run joint electoral tickets with groups seemingly antithetical to its own beliefs, including the Lebanese Forces, Syrian Ba'thists, Communists and the Syrian Social Nationalists.[22] Although Horowitz criticises this political system as not encouraging the development of long-lasting coalitions, it does force groups to work together, even if temporarily, to become elected and to achieve policy objectives.[23] Additionally, Hizballah has enjoyed a longstanding and productive coalition with the Christian Free Patriotic Movement, which is a further example of Hizballah's willingness to form working relationships with those of alternate political views. This coalition was formalised in a memorandum of understanding signed by both parties in 2006.[24]

Although Hizballah had initially refused to join Lebanon's Cabinet because it did not want to legitimise the Confessional System (which was also reflected in the makeup of the Cabinet), it has participated in government since 2005. Hizballah's embedding in government shows its political evolution. In modifying its earlier position on boycotting government, Hizballah demonstrated increasing pragmatism, a clear outcome of its political engagement. Hizballah has also demonstrated an ability to compromise with other political players. During the 2013 electoral reform debate, Hizballah backed the Orthodox Gathering proposal that was put up by the Orthodox Christian communities. Although the proposal did not represent any improvement of the political position of the Shi'a, it was backed by the parliamentary committee on electoral reform and Hizballah

20 International Crisis Group, "Lebanon: Managing the gathering storm," 5 December 2006. http://www.cggl.org/publicdocs/Lebanon_Managing_the_Gathering_%20Storm.pdf (Accessed 30 June 2011).

21 M. Chartouni-Dubarry, "Hizballah: from militia to political party" in R. Hollis & N. Shehadi (eds.), *Lebanon on Hold: Implications for Middle East Peace,* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996).

22 J. Harik, *Hezbollah: The changing face of terrorism*.

23 D. Horowitz, "Constitutional Design: proposals versus processes," Paper presented at the conference 'Constitutional Design 2000: Institutional Design, Conflict Management, and Democracy in the Late Twentieth Century,' Kellogg Institute, University of Notre Dame, December 1999.

24 J. Alagha, *Hizbullah's documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, p. 105.

acknowledged that it allayed many of the concerns of Lebanon's minority Christian sects.[25]

According to Schwedler, the absence of a single ruling party in Lebanon is another incentive that encourages inclusion. In Jordan, the fact that no ruling party existed (the Monarchy does not formally engage in the political sphere) enabled the Islamic Action Front to explore cooperative alliances with a broad range of groups, promoting policy moderation.[26] This is a stark contrast to the experience of Islamist groups in Yemen and Mubarak's Egypt, who had to run in elections against the ruling party, with the full awareness that the ruling party would win.[27] In such scenarios, opposition groups are forced to form close relationships with the ruling party to guarantee their own access to power, diluting the potential moderating-influence of a genuine parliamentary system. However, in Lebanon the absence of a ruling party or undemocratic institutional power-broker has enabled Hizballah to cultivate coalitions with all parties and criticise government policy as it saw fit, without fear of institutional retribution or being banned from elections. However, it has also meant that Lebanon does not have a strong powerbroker than can 'police' political behaviour and enforce serious punishment, a reality that became very clear in 2008.

Many believed that Hizballah had completely transformed.[28] Advocates of this argument point to Sheikh al-Tufayli's 'Revolt of the Hungry' in 1997, a civil disobedience campaign in the Beqaa Valley that attempted to undermine Hizballah's social service credentials.[29] Hizballah's response demonstrated its maturity as a political actor. When al-Tufayli and his supporters occupied a Hizballah seminary in Ba'albek, Hizballah asked the Lebanese army to intervene.[30] It is hard to overstate the significance of Hizballah's decision to not use its far-superior military forces to resolve the issue; instead it gave a nod of legitimacy to Lebanon's military as the guardians of peace

25 H. Lakkis, "Christian parties, Hezbollah and Amal firm on Orthodox plan", *The Daily Star*, 25 February 2013.http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Opinion/Commentary/2013/Feb-25/207794-christian-parties-hezbollah-and-amal-firm-on-orthodox-plan.ashx (Accessed 30 June 2013)

26 J. Schwedler, *Faith in moderation: Islamist parties in Jordan and Yemen*, p. 179.

27 Ibid. p. 195.

28 A. Norton, *Hizballah of Lebanon: Extremist Ideals vs. Mundane Politics*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999), p. 35.

29 A. Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion*, (London: Pluto Press, 2002).

30 Ibid.

in Lebanon. In this, Hizballah indicated its internal 'democratic bargain,' whereby access to the resources and power of parliament were of greater value than its need to enforce internal discipline violently.

Despite these achievements, there are also a number of disincentives to moderation inherent in the Lebanese political system. However, Wickham suggests that even a limited democratic system can prompt change amongst radical groups, so partial democratisation can sometimes be enough.[31] The Lebanese confessional system is unique, as discussed above, but given that Lebanon's Shi'a are only permitted 27 seats (just over 21 percent) in the 128-seat parliament, the Lebanese electoral system is highly inequitable for members of the sect. The Shi'a are thought to make up between 40 and 55 percent of the Lebanese population, ensuring that they are considerably underrepresented in parliament.[32] This formed a major obstacle to Shi'a political groups fully reaping the benefits of democratic behaviour. This political disparity is widened further by inequitable electoral boundaries that force Muslim representatives to be elected by a much larger number of voters than their Christian counterparts. According to Democracy Reporting International, this means that 'Muslim votes count less than Christian votes.'[33] With this in mind, Wittes considers the absence of full democracy to be a major barrier to a group's likelihood of moderation.[34] However, while these disincentives were not sufficient to completely deter Hizballah from participating, they were likely a barrier to its complete assimilation. As a result, it must be asked whether Hizballah's inability to fully succeed within the system played a role in the lead-up to 2008, as it likely provided a limitation on what the group was willing to sacrifice as part of the "democratic bargain" given that it knew it would never fully enjoy the benefits of participation.

31 C. Wickham, "The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's Wasat Party", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 36 No. 2, 2004.

32 There is much debate about the size of the Shi'a in Lebanon today. Norton estimates that they make up 40 percent of the population. See: N. Conan, "Who is Hezbollah," NPR: Talk of the Nation, 19 July 2006, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5568093 (Accessed 1March 2008). ; Joseph Alagha however, suggests that the Shi'a make up 55 percent of the population. See: J. Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology and Political Program*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p. 26.

33 Democracy Reporting International, *Lebanon : Assessment of the Electoral Framework : Election Law of 2008*, (Berlin/Beirut: Democracy Reporting International, 2008).p. 7.

34 T. Wittes, "Islamist parties: Three kinds of movements", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 19 No. 3, 2008.

A further obstacle to democratisation existed by way of Syria, whose ongoing role in Lebanon made it a "King Maker" in Lebanese politics.[35] Syria wanted to keep Hizballah on a tight leash, constraining its electoral success by forcing it to forge coalitions with Amal (its Shi'a rival), splitting the Shi'a representation in parliament and curbing Hizballah's potential mandate.[36] In 1996, Hizballah announced that it would field independent candidates to run on electoral lists in the country's south. However, after an emergency meeting in Damascus, Hizballah retracted its decision and announced that it would run on a shared ticket with Amal, curtailing its electoral potential.[37] Although Syria's influence on the electoral system is less pronounced since the 2005 withdrawal, it is clear that Syria acted as an obstacle to Hizballah, at least in its early days of democratisation.

While Wickham noted that political systems do not need to be completely democratic to spur moderation, it became clear that there was a sharp limit to Hizballah's democratic commitment once the survival of its military wing was drawn into questionin 2008. The crisis began when the Lebanese government shut down Hizballah's private security and communications infrastructure and sacked the Hizballah-linked security chief at Beirut Airport, a move that threatened Hizballah's intelligence capabilities and military operations.[38] Since the Lebanese institutional system could not seriously enforce political norms, Hizballah faced no 'sticks' to discourage it from taking this political battle outside of the parliament. As a result, Hizballah sent gunmen into Beirut. Street fighting between rival militias followed, leaving 11 dead, and representing the worst outbreak of violence since the civil war. It prompted some observers to predict the imminent return of full-scale civil war to Lebanon.[39] Although peace was quickly restored through the Doha Agreement, the incident provided an early indicator of the limits of Hizballah's compliance to democratic norms. In this experience, Hizballah clearly demonstrated that it did not respect the will of the Lebanese government, even though it had been an integral part of the system for

35 R. Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005).

36 Ibid.

37 A. Samii, "A stable structure on shifting sands: assessing the Hizbullah-Iran-Syria realtionship", *Middle East Journal,*Vol. 62. No. 1.p. 42, 2007.

38 A. Statton & E. Stewart, "Violence escalates between Sunni and Shia in Beirut," *The Guardian*, 9 May 2008.

39 H. Macleod, "Lebanese declaration threatens civil war", *The Observer*, 11 May 2008.

16 years. Through its actions, Hizballah also implied the ongoing centrality of its military wing to the group's identity. The 2008 crisis therefore showed that the group's temperate behaviour and track record of democratic achievement between 1992 and 2008 could quickly be forgotten once its military wing was at stake.

As a result, while Hizballah participated fully in the democratic process after 1992 and was willing to make minor compromises to its own goals in the name of political practicalities, it is clear that there were very significant limitations on what Hizballah was willing to sacrifice. The meagre political incentives that the system offered were not sufficient for it to compromise its military wing. While Schwedler notes that even limited democratic openings can still prompt moderation, the confessional structure of Lebanon's political system meant that Hizballah could not seriously influence government policy, even with its substantial constituency.[40] In robbing Lebanese political actors of the agency associated with a genuine democratic mandate, the Lebanese political system discouraged moderation in Hizballah, and ensured that the pattern of peaceful political participation would only be sustained for as long as Hizballah's military wing was allowed to coexist. In this way, 2008 provided an important test for the group, because it was the first time that the survival of its military wing was seriously at stake. The fact that the "veto" power that Hizballah attained as part of the Doha Agreement (which gave the parliamentary opposition the ability to veto government policies) was a factor in resolving the political impasse, suggests Hizballah's frustration with the democratic barriers it faces.[41] However, 'Political Opportunity Structures' are not the only aspect of Schwedler's criteria that Hizballah has failed to meet; in fact, Hizballah's Internal Group Structures have been the key reason that Hizballah continues to consider its military wing so important.

Internal Group Structures

Hizballah underwent structural change in the lead up to its political participation to make the group more capable of negotiating Lebanon's political environment. However, the group remains a hierarchical organisation with limited internal democracy, which is a further barrier to moderation.

40 J. Schwedler, *Faith in moderation: Islamist parties in Jordan and Yemen*.

41 "Hezbollah leader demands veto power", *The Associated Press*, 1 April 2008.

There are some elements of transparency and openness in Hizballah. Like many political players in Lebanon, the group maintains public headquarters, a media office and numerous hospitals, health clinics and schools.[42] Indeed, Hizballah has a very public face, which it promotes via its television network, radio station and print materials.[43] Hizballah has demonstrated an interest in disseminating first-hand information to its constituents, as evidenced by the publication of a nearly-300 page account of the group's history, policies and goals by Deputy Secretary-General, Naim Qassem.[44] Hizballah can also call upon its constituents to participate in mass protests at little notice, as seen in 2005 in the period surrounding the assassination of Rafik Hariri.[45] As a result, there is little doubt that Hizballah is a broad-based, popular movement. There is also a level of democracy in the group's inner workings. The group's top *Shura Council* is elected every 2-3 years, and is responsible for the day-to-day running of all aspects of organisation. It was the *Shura Council* that initially approved Hizballah's democratic engagement through an internal ballot that was won by 10 votes to two.[46] The Council also elects Hizballah's Secretary General to three years terms. Membership of the *Shura Council* usually includes one non-religious member. Internal democracy has led to some internal change, including in 2004, when Hizballah appointed its first female, Rima Fakhry, to its 18-member politburo. According to Alagha, this change took place following a heated internal debate.[47] Wafa' Hutayat has since become the first female Deputy of the group's Central Information Office.[48]

Despite this appearance of openness, Hizballah retains a "hierarchical pyramid structure."[49] Much of the group's internal activity remains shrouded in secrecy, which it justifies as necessary to protect its military strategy. Hizballah's political activities are undertaken by a new wing that is subordinate to the *Shura Council*. This dif-

42 J. Gleis & B. Berti, *Hezbollah and Hamas: A comparative study*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

43 J. Harik, "Between Islam and the system: Sources and implications of popular support for Lebanon's Hizballah", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 40 No. 1, 1996.

44 N. Qassem, *Hizbullah: The story from within*, (London: Saqi, 2006).

45 H. Fattah, "Hezbollah leads huge pro-Syrian protest in central Beirut", *The New York Times*, 8 March 2005.

46 A. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*.

47 J. Alagha, *Hizbullah's documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, p. 27.

48 Ibid.

49 N. Qassem, *Hizbullah: The story from within*, p. 60.

fers from other Islamist groups that have engaged in democracy, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, which established the Islamic Action Front as an autonomous political entity to carry out the group's political agenda. The Islamic Action Front holds regular elections where its top leaders change regularly.[50]

In contrast to the Islamic Action Front, Hizballah's *Shura Council* controls both the political and military wings of the group from the top-down.[51] This means that the body that makes decisions about the group's political platform also determines the group's military strategy. As a result, the group's military wing has remained inextricably tied to Hizballah's political activities. Furthermore, despite the semblance of internal democracy, the *Shura Council*'s membership has barely changed since the civil war. In fact, most of the group's civil war leaders remain on the Council.[52] Hizballah's Secretary General, Hassan Nasrallah, has been the Secretary General of Hizballah since 1992, and was re-elected for life in 2001.[53]

Nasrallah and the *Shura Council*'s authority is absolute, ensuring that disagreements are almost never made public, with the exception of al-Tufayli's frequent criticism of the group. The will of the *Shura Council* has been consistently implemented, without exception. In 2004, al-Tufayli accused Nasrallah of having "total hegemony and tyrannical control" over the group.[54] The *Shura Council* is also responsible for selecting parliamentary candidates.[55] Although candidates have included laymen, academics and business figures, the range of the candidates may reflect the strategic considerations of Hizballah's leaders, rather than the diversity of Hizballah's body politic. Although it is not unusual for a political party's senior leadership to choose electoral candidates (even in the western world), it has further inhibited Hizballah's political evolution.

There have been minor adjustments to the membership of the *Shura,* including the election of Hizballah parliamentarian Mohammed

50 J. Schwedler, *Faith in moderation: Islamist parties in Jordan and Yemen.*

51 J. Gleis & B. Berti, *Hezbollah and Hamas: A comparative study*.

52 E. Azani, "Hezbollah – a global terrorist organization – situational report as of September 2006," Submission to the US House Committee on International Relations – Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, 28 September 2006.

53 J. Alagha, *Hizbullah's documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*.

54 Cited in: J. Alagha. *Hizbullah's documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*.p. 26.

55 J. Herrick, "Nonstate actors: A comparative analysis of change and development within Hamas and Hezbollah."

Ra'd, to the Council. While Alagha suggests that this was a major adjustment because it accorded Hizballah's "parliamentary work a great status," it did not lead to a tangible change in the group's prioritisation of its military wing. In fact, Hizballah's two major divergences from democracy in 2008 and 2013 took place during the period that Ra'd was on the Council. The absence of leadership change also means that Hizballah has not experienced the level of generational change that one might expect for a group involved in the Lebanese political arena for more than 20 years.[56] This has ensured that Hizballah's military wing -which was its main asset during the 1980s- has remained a fundamental part of the group's identity.

It is important to note however, that while Hizballah might not stack up as a 'democratic' organisation in the western sense, its hierarchical organisational structure and lack of transparency is unexceptional in Lebanon. In fact, Hizballah's broad base and group decision-making processes stand in stark contrast to the fiefdoms that characterise most political parties in Lebanon. However, while it is beyond the scope of this article to speculate on the democratic sincerity of Lebanon's other political groups, Schwedler has identified intra-party democracy as a key indicator of a group's propensity for moderation, ensuring that Hizballah's lack of internal democracy is relevant to this case study, even if it is the norm for all political parties in Lebanon.

Hizballah's failure to democratise internally represents another indicator of the limitations of its democratic engagement. Schwedler notes that the "potential for ideological moderation … hinges in part on the manner in which party leaders reach decisions on contentious issues and the extent to which those positions are honoured."[57] Although this formalised command structure was of great benefit to Hizballah initially because it enabled it to undertake a rapid transformation, it quickly became a barrier to the group's democratic evolution.[58] The absence of leadership change and grassroots succession over a twenty year period has meant that the relevance of the group's military wing has not been reassessed, and remains an extension of its political aims. As a result, in 2008 and during

56 E. Azani, "Hezbollah – a global terrorist organization – situational report as of September 2006."

57 J. Schwedler, *Faith in moderation: Islamist parties in Jordan and Yemen*, p.96.

58 M. Devore, "Exploring the Iran-Hezbollah relationship: A case study of how state sponsorship affects terrorist group decision-making", *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 6 No. 4-5, 2012.

the Syrian uprising, Hizballahquickly reverted to its survival *modus operandi*, subordinating the Lebanese political environment and its constituents in the name of its own military integrity. If there was a younger generation of leaders in charge of Hizballah, the response may have been entirely different, or at least less extreme.

The Boundaries of Justifiable Action

Hizballah's flexible ideology is a major strength for the organisation, as it enabled the group to easily reconcile its goals with the Lebanese democratic system, and thereby justify participation. Schwedler considers this to be a key feature of a group's proclivity to moderation, because it signals the boundaries within which a group will act.[59] Hizballah's democratic engagement was therefore presented as compatible with its existing "Islamic" ideology and was successfully sold to its constituents.[60] It was further legitimised by the eminent Lebanese Shi'a cleric, Sheikh Fadlallah, who told his followers that "change does not happen only through revolution… it could be achieved by penetrating democratic institutions to promote Islamic ideals."[61] Ali Khamene'i, Hizballah's Supreme Guide, also sanctioned the engagement. The movement did not find it difficult to introduce democratic ideas to its platform, as Lebanon's history meant that the discourse of democracy was familiar to the Lebanese populace. The desire for peace, the popularity of the Ta'if Agreement and the reinstatement of the electoral system gave further impetus to the credibility of its transition. As a result, Hizballah's ideological transformation from anti-system militia to parliamentary party was relatively seamless.

Hizballah also dropped its ambitions for an Islamic State, acknowledging that Lebanon's mixed religious demographics render the ideal unworkable.[62] Although this was a major change, Norton observes that it really had no choice, suggesting that "the game of politics may erode ideals, but the vast majority of Hizballah's followers want to be in the game."[63] In place of an Islamic state objective,

59 J. Schwedler, *Faith in moderation: Islamist parties in Jordan and Yemen*.

60 J. Harik, *Hezbollah: The changing face of terrorism*.

61 Cited in D. Phillips, *From Bullets to Ballots: Violent Muslim movements in transition*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009), p. 45.

62 A. Saouli, "Lebanon's Hizbullah: The quest for survival", *World Affairs*, Vol. 166 No. 2, 2003.

63 A. Norton, *Hizballah of Lebanon: Extremist Ideals vs. Mundane Politics*, p. 35.

Hizballah moved to prioritise the Islamic ideals of social justice and equality. Hizballah re-framed its *jihad*, citing its involvement in parliament as an example of non-violent struggle. Its parliamentarians advanced the 'Islamic' cause by drawing attention to the injustice faced by Muslims in Lebanon and worked to improve their lot.[64] Hizballah became an advocate of communal harmony and peace, with Nasrallah's claim that,

A pillar of our movement is the need to respect others, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, and to forge relations with them on a Koranic, moral basis. As Imam Ali said, "There are two kinds of people; either a brother in religion or a peer in morality – either a brother in Islam or an equal in humanity."[65]

In pursuit of this goal, Hizballah leaders attended Islamic-Christian dialogue meetings and met with key Christian leaders in order to assuage their concerns about the group's political goals. Hizballah members then held 'get to know us' sessions in their own homes, where members of the wider public met the movement's partisans to be convinced that Hizballah did not seek to undermine the political order.[66] Hizballah's 2009 political platform clarifies that Hizballah's animosity is directed towards Israel, rather than to Jewish people as a whole. It also differentiates between the US government and its citizens, a nuance not made in the group's 1985 manifesto or by other Islamists such as al Qaeda.[67]

Hizballah's ideological transformation has been consistently reflected in the group's role in parliament. Its new platform was evident in every policy that Hizballah put forward or supported. Hizballah became characterised by a commitment to accountability and transparency, as well as its vehement criticism of the entrenched corruption in Lebanon, making it a lone voice among Lebanon's political elite.[68] It is difficult to overstate how unusual this is in Lebanon. Indeed, Ranstorp believes that Hizballah has distinguished itself from its competitors by framing itself as a "moral force" that protects and defends the less well-off and interrogates the otherwise off-limits

64 J. Harik, *Hezbollah: The changing face of terrorism*.

65 Cited in Ibid, p. 78.

66 Ibid. p. 74.

67 Cited in A. Samii, "A stable structure on shifting sands: assessing the Hizbullah-Iran-Syria realtionship", pp. 36-7.

68 A. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*.

Lebanese elite for their excesses.[69] Hizballah is the only party in Lebanon purported to be untainted by political corruption.[70] High-ranking Lebanese officials from across the political spectrum have acknowledged Hizballah's responsible conduct in Parliament.[71] This behaviour has remained consistent for more than 20 years, drawing into question suggestions that Hizballah is a mere wolf in sheep's clothing.[72]

Although Hizballah refused to participate in government until 2005, it formed a "loyal opposition." However, this opposition to government was not blanket; it took a constructive approach, addressing each policy on its merits and offering support or criticism accordingly.[73] Remaining vehement opponents of confessionalism, Hizballah was highly critical of the late-Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri's reconstruction projects, which it saw as profit oriented and not aimed at benefiting Lebanon's poor.[74] It heavily criticised the channelling of development budgets and projects into constituencies loyal to Lebanon's governing elite, and Hizballah initiated a vote of no confidence in the Hariri government in 1992 and 1995 on corruption grounds.

Hizballah also used its own social service networks to further its image as an advocate of social justice and genuine representative of the poor.[75] It opened high-quality hospitals, usually located in Shi'a areas, but also used by Christians (although there are reports of non-Shi'a citizens being turned away).[76] It also operates schools, pharmacies and public assistance programs, including food distribution and loan centres. It is estimated that between 1988 and 1991, Hizballah repaired 1,000 homes that had been damaged by Israel.[77] Hizballah's social service provision has garnered it public

69 M. Ranstorp, *Hizb'Allah in Lebanon: The politics of the Western Hostage Crisis*, p. 116.

70 L. Deeb, "Hizballah: A primer," *Middle East Report Online*, 31 July 2006.

71 A. Norton, "Hizballah: From Radicalism to Pragmatism?"

72 For an example of this argument, see E. Ezani, "Hezbollah's strategy of "walking on the edge": Between political game and political violence."

73 A. Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion*.

74 A. Hamzeh, "Lebanon's Hizbullah: From Islamic revolution to parliamentary accommodation", *Third World Quarterly,* Vol. 14 No. 2, 1993.

75 F. El Khazen, "Political parties in postwar Lebanon: Parties in search of partisans", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 57 No. 4, 2003.

76 A. Norton, "Hizballah: From Radicalism to Pragmatism?"

77 M. Ranstorp, "The Strategy and Tactics of Hizballah's 'Lebanonisation Process'", *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 3 No. 1, 1998.

respect and support over the years, providing many Lebanese what the state could or would not.[78]

Hizballah's ideological flexibility ensured that justifying behaviour in Lebanon's electoral system was not difficult. Backed by powerhouses in Lebanon such as Fadlallah, Hizballah was able to very quickly convince its constituents -and indeed members of the wider population- that it represented a genuine partner of peace in Lebanon, whose engagement in democracy was consistent with its ideological stand. This change was reflected throughout Hizballah's behaviour in parliament and its policies, suggesting it met Schwedler's criteria as having wide boundaries of justifiable behaviour.

Schwedler considers the boundaries within which a group can justify participation to be an important feature in the promotion of moderation, however, it is clear that this is a two-way relationship. The boundaries set by constituents are also important because in democracies, the limits of acceptable political behaviour that are defined by voters do not have to align with traditional democratic expectations. This is a particularly important nuance for the Hizballah case, as Hizballah has been able to retain support for its military wing because the appetite for independent resistance against Israel remains strong amongst its constituents. The Ta'if-legitimised "resistance" to Israel received token support from the Lebanese political elite and was backed by members of the Lebanese population who were sympathetic to those living under occupation in southern Lebanon. This support is particularly strong amongst Hizballah's direct Shi'a constituents, giving Hizballah a quasi-democratic mandate to continue its resistance.[79] Although there is some opposition within Lebanon, low political will and Hizballah's unwavering commitment to its military wing has ensured that disarmament remains unlikely.[80] Further, Hizballah has been able to frame its resistance as consistent with its political platform, framing its *jihad* against Israel as a moral cause where the Lebanese population needed to stand up against the "repressive" Israeli military incursions on southern Lebanon.

Hizballah's use of violence appeared to be tempered by its participation in democracy, albeit temporarily. While Hizballah acted

78 G. Trendle, "The grass roots of success", *The Middle East*, 1 February 1993.

79 J. Harik, *Hezbollah: The changing face of terrorism*.

80 "Lebanon rivals agree crisis deal", *BBC News*, 21 May 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7411835.stm (acessed 5 July 2013).

aggressively to defend its support base in the 1980s, in the 1990s, Hizballah demonstrated accountability to its constituents, even in its violence against Israel. Hizballah therefore closely gauged constituents' expectations, only attacking military targets considered legitimate in the eyes of the Lebanese and avoiding acts that risked Israeli retaliation.[81] This engagement with its constituents meant that Hizballah worked hard to avoid unnecessary civilian casualties, or damage to the fragile Lebanese economy which had begun to recover from the civil war. It is clear that Hizballah carefully considered its use of violence to ensure that it did not unnerve its supporters at the polls.[82] As a result, Hizballah used its weapons in relatively limited capacity and only sporadically after 1992. It suspended attacks in election years with the exception of 1996.[83] Until 2008, there was little evidence that Hizballah would act overtly against the interests of the Lebanese. As such, Noe observed that Hizballah's use of violence was always "placed squarely within the confines of political costs and benefits for the movement."[84] This saw Hizballah participate in prisoner-exchanges and even formalise rules of engagement with Israel that committed both sides to attacking only military targets.[85] Although there were times when Hizballah miscalculated or overplayed its hand, including in 1996 and 2006, as a rule, this pattern led to remarkably stable relations between Hizballah and Israel. There were also serious violations by both sides at times, although a pattern of proportionate "an eye for an eye" violations became the conflict's norm. For example, when the IDF destroyed a Syrian radar in the Lebanon Valley, Hizballah retaliated in kind, destroying an Israeli radar.[86]

Hizballah's international operations were scaled-back significantly after 1992, and also followed this 'tit for tat' pattern, largely targeting Israeli interests. For example, in an apparent response to the Israeli assassination of then-Hizballah Secretary-General 'Abbas al-Musawi, Hizballah bombed the Israeli Embassy and a Jewish

81 J. Gunning, "Hizballah and the logic of political participation" in M. Heiberg, B. O'Leary & J. Tirman (eds.), *Terror, insurgency and the state: Ending protracted conflicts*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

82 Ibid.

83 A. Mannes, M. Michael, A. Pate, A. Slive, V. Subrahamian & J. Wilkenfeld, *Stochastic Opponent Modeling Agents: A Case Study with Hizbullah*, (College Park: University of Maryland, 2008)

84 N. Noe, *The relationship between Hizbullah & the United States in light of the current situation in the Middle East*, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2006). p. 12.

85 A. Norton, *Hizballah of Lebanon: Extremist Ideals vs. Mundane Politics*.

86 D. Sobelman, *New rules of the game*, (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 2004).

Community Centre in Buenos Aires in 1992 and 1994, resulting in significant deaths and casualties.[87] A number of other international incidents in the 1990s have been attributed to Hizballah, but were not claimed and never credibly confirmed.[88] In an isolated case more recently, Hizballah was also linked to planned bombings of Israeli targets in Bangkok in early 2012, in possible retaliation for the suspected Israeli-assassination of Hizballah's intelligence chief, Imad Mughniyeh.[89]

While Hizballah's military wing appears to have been restrained, the group demonstrated in 2008 and 2013 that it would use this capacity in the name of self-preservation. Evidently, the exceptionally wide boundaries of acceptable action are a serious limitation of the group's propensity to moderate and the Lebanese system gave the group little incentive to disarm and cull its military wing. Therefore, it had a greater range of options than other political parties, because it could fall back on its military wing when it did not get its way. It also enabled Hizballah to retain a highly trained army with resources and skills superior to the Lebanese state, ensuring that the government had had no ability to enforce its decisions. As long as Hizballah retained this latent capacity, there was always going to be the temptation to use it when their survival is at stake. This posed a major limitation of Hizballah's democratic engagement.

Foreign Patrons

In addition to Schwedler's model, Hizballah's foreign patrons, Iran and Syria, have provided a further barrier to moderation. Although their relationship with Hizballah has led to both constraint and provocation, these links are the root of the inevitability of the Syrian intervention. Syria and Iran are still considered key supporters of Hizballah, with one Syrian analyst saying "if Iran is Hizballah's oxygen tank, Syria would be the air hose."[90] Both parties are fundamental to Hizballah's ability to obtain military materials.

87 C. BrafmanKittner, "The role of safe havens in Islamist terrorism", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 19 No. 3, 2007.

88 S. Hajjar, *Hizballah: Terrorism, national liberation or menace?*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2002).

89 "Thailand arrests Hezbollah suspect after US Bangkok alert", *BBC News Asia*, 13 January 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16543447 (accessed 5 July 2013).

90 Cited in R. Roumani, "Syria's last trump card", *Bitter Lemons*, Vol. 36 No. 2, 2004, http://www.bitterlemons-international.org/inside.php?id=232 (accessed 4 February 2014)

Iran remains a key financial contributor to Hizballah, which, according to Levitt's testimony to the US Senate, may be worth between $100 and $200 million per year.[91] Critically, Iran provides Hizballah with its weapons, making it a fundamental partner in the viability of Hizballah's military wing. Surprisingly, it has been known to prod Hizballah into militant or peaceful actions from time to time, with only limited success.[92]

Hizballah's relationship with Syria has more plainly demonstrated the danger posed by the group's commitment to its sponsors in recent years. Blanford considers Hizballah to be one of Syria's "few, if not the only, potent bargaining chips to put pressure on the Jewish state to return the strategic plateau" (the Golan).[93] As a result, a close relationship endured, although Gambill and Abdelnour suggest is akin to a "loveless marriage".[94] Syria's major influence over Hizballah has been its role in transferring weapons between Iran and Hizballah via Damascus.[95] A senior Israeli military official suggested that the relationship works along the lines of, "Iran pays, Syria smuggles and Hezbollah receives", demonstrating the importance of Syria in Hizballah's supply chain.[96] As a result, Syria has had a more hands-on influence than Iran, and at times this led Hizballah to actions seemingly inconsistent with the group's normal parliamentary character, including its involvement in the assassination of the former-Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri, in 2005.[97] Indeed, Hizballah's international relationships made sure that even in the periods of Hizballah's deepest commitment to the Lebanese democratic system, it would still have one eye on the wider regional situation.

91 M. Levitt, "Testimony to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Hezbollah: Financing terror through criminal enterprise", Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States Senate, 25 May 2005, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/pdf/hezbollah-testimony-05252005.pdf p. 3.

92 D. Sobelman, "Hizbollah after the Syrian withdrawal", *Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 8 No. 1, 2005.

93 N. Blanford, "Irritating Israel," *Bitter Lemons,* Vol. 36, 2004, http://www.bitterlemons-international.org/inside.php?id=233 (accessed 30 June 2008)

94 G. Gambill & Z. Abdelnour, "Hezbollah: Between Tehran and Damascus", *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 4 No. 2, 2002.

95 Ibid.

96 Cited in A. Harel & A. Issacharoff, "Iran pays, Syria smuggles, and Hezbollah receives", *Haaretz*, 14 October 2009.

97 N. Blanford, "Did Hezbollah kill Hariri?", *Foreign Policy*, 1 April 2010, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/04/01/did_hezbollah_kill_hariri (accessed 2 September 2013).

The Syrian Conflict

Reports in early 2012 that the bodies of Hizballah fighters were being repatriated back to Lebanon provided the first evidence that Hizballah was supporting the Assad regime's crackdown on the Syrian uprising.[98] At that time, small numbers of Hizballah cadres were purportedly fighting alongside Assad's forces across Syria.[99] However, the situation escalated in May 2013 when Western intelligence sources reported that up to 7,000 Hizballah troops had crossed the border into Syria.[100] This was later confirmed by Nasrallah, who told his supporters that "if Syria falls into the hands of America, Israel and the takfiris, the people of our region will enter a dark period…If we do not go there to fight them…they will come here."[101] Hizballah fighters proved vital in Assad's hard-won victory in June 2013 in Qusair, a smuggling town on Syrian border. The victory turned the tide in Syria, at least temporarily, enabling the re-capture of a number of strategic northern Syrian villages and towns that had fallen to the opposition, re-securing Assad's supply routes. Hizballah has since been observed in other battles alongside Syrian troops in Lebanon, including the intense fighting in Homs.[102]

Confirmation of Hizballah's involvement in Syria caused a backlash from rival groups in Lebanon, with Hizballah's supporters violently targeted.[103] Consequently, the EU listed Hizballah's military wing as a terrorist organisation, a step the EU had resisted in the face of US

98 O. Ward, "Syria: How Hezbollah became a game-changer", *The Star*, 23 July 2013, http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/07/23/syria_how_hezbollah_became_a_gamechanger.html (accessed 11th August 2013).; "More Hezbollah fighters killed in Syria buried in Lebanon",*Ya Libnan*, 8 April 2013, http://www.yalibnan.com/2013/04/08/more-hezbollah-fighters-killed-in-syria-to-be-buried-in-lebanon/ (accessed 11 August 2013).

99 N. Blanford, "Accusations mount of Hezbollah fighting in Syria", *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 October 2012, http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/1015/Accusations-mount-of-Hezbollah-fighting-in-Syria (accessed 11 August 2013).

100 "Syria: Hezbollah triumphs, but loses veterans", UPI, 30 May 2013, http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2013/05/30/Syria-Hezbollah-triumphs-but-loses-veterans/UPI-98951369939886/ (accessed 5 July 2013).

101 Cited in L. Morris, "Hezbollah chief defends group's involvement in Syrian war",*The Washington Post*, 26 May 2013.

102 "Reports: Syrian Troops, Hezbollah consolidate gains in Homs", *VOA News*, 28 July 2013, http://www.voanews.com/content/report-says-syrian-troops-hezbollah-consolidate-gains-in-homs/1711770.html (accessed 11 August 2013).

103 B. Mroue& Z. Karam, "Explosion rocks Hezbollah stronghold in Beirut as Syria's war spills into Lebanon",*The Globe and Mail,* 9 July 2013. ; D. Kraiche& R. Al-Fakih, "Ambush targets Hezbollah convoy", *The Daily Star*, 17 July 2013, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2013/Jul-17/223970-ambush-targets-hezbollah-convoy.ashx#axzz2ZNfHqULK (accessed 11 August 2013).

pressure for many years prior.[104] The US Deputy Secretary of State William Burns predicted that it is only a matter of time before the Syrian conflict spreads to Lebanon.[105]

Hizballah's involvement in Syria would have almost certainly abhorred its constituents, who had long expressed their concern about the potential return of war to Lebanon. Lebanon has been widely viewed as a potential spill-over point for the Syrian uprising because of its similar religious demographics, already-tense communal atmosphere and weak national army.[106] While previously Hizballah had sought to operate closely within its constituents' expectations of security and stability, Hizballah deemed its involvement in Syria as a necessary move to back its ally in the ailing Assad regime. Indeed, Hizballah would be considerably isolated and weakened in the absence of the Assad regime, signalling that now that Hizballah's own survival was on the line, constituent safety became secondary. As such, the Syrian uprising represented a major sidestep for Hizballah from its prior operations within the Lebanon/Israel politico-security arena, although it was not entirely surprising considering the events of 2008. In this way, Hizballah's involvement in the Syrian uprising needs to be understood as more than just Hizballah intervening in conflict in a neighbouring country. It represents the group's decision to galvanise its Syrian backer, whatever the cost to the Lebanese Shi'a.

Schwedler's three factors directly influenced Hizballah's decision to engage in Syria, with the interaction between the three severely limiting the group's allegiance to the Lebanese system. The political opportunities offered by the Lebanese state were no longer compelling in the face of the near-certain death of the military wing that has remained central to the group's identity. The system's built-in structural failure to fully integrate Hizballah as a political player has been a major barrier in this regard. Further, Hizballah's military wing endured due to the absence of leadership change and the closed internal organisational structure. This has meant that Hizballah's

104 J. Kanter & J. Rodoren, "European Union Adds Military Wing of Hezbollah to List of Terrorist Organizations",*The New York Times*, 23 July 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/23/world/middleeast/european-union-adds-hezbollah-wing-to-terror-list.html?pagewanted=all (accessed 11 August 2013).

105 "U.S. diplomat blasts Hezbollah over role in Syria war",*CBS News*, 1 July 2013, http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202_162-57591762/u.s-diplomat-blasts-hezbollah-over-role-in-syria-war/ (accessed 11 August 2013).

106 R. Sherlock, "Clashes in Lebanon as Syria conflict spills over", *The Telegraph,* 24 June 2013.

military and political ambitions remained intimately linked, ensuring that Hizballah failed to substantially shift its civil war priorities and mentality, even though Lebanon has enjoyed more than twenty years of internal peace. Finally, Hizballah's continued constituent support and wide boundaries of justifiable behaviour gave it little incentive to demilitarise over the years and preserved a capacity to respond in Syria when the crisis arose. Indeed, Hizballah has never had to seriously engage in discussions about its disarmament. In sustaining this latent capability, the group would always face the temptation to fall back on its weapons if circumstances demanded it.

In short, the weakening of its sponsor in Syria tested Hizballah's underlying priorities and has ultimately revealed Hizballah's level of commitment to democratic values. For the second time since 1992, survival became key and quickly elevated Hizballah's priorities outside its parliamentary paradigm to a position where its democratic support was no longer its primary concern.

Conclusion

Hizballah appeared to have undergone a major transformation after engaging in Lebanon's electoral system. Between 1992 and 2008, it largely downplayed violence in favour of competitive parliamentary politics. Hizballah seemed closely attuned to its constituents and cautious to maintain the support base that guarantees its survival. Further, in its participation in government after years of boycott, Hizballah demonstrated political development. Democracy moderated Hizballah's use of violence and the conflict with Israel became contained. Rarely targeting civilians, Hizballah submitted to a highly regulated conflict with Israel that could be managed with political will on both sides.[107] In this way, Hizballah appeared to undergo a moderation process, supporting observations by many commentators that the group had changed.[108]

Schwedler's model identified a number of warning signs in Hizballah's behaviour after 1992 that suggested it had not fully submitted itself to democratic norms, ensuring that an intervention on behalf

107 N. Blanford, "Israel scrables aircraft as Lebanon hears news", *The Times*, 5 November 2004.

108 J. Harik, "Between Islam and the system: Sources and implications of popular support for Lebanon's Hizballah" ; A. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*.

of one of its patrons - in the name of its own survival - was always a possibility. Lebanon's political system had provided a number of opportunities and constraints for Hizballah's engagement, but in the end was a barrier to Hizballah gaining a parliamentary mandate that accurately reflected its level of support. This provided the incentive for Hizballah to step outside the system when seriously threatened by a government whose decisions it had little chance of influencing. In short, the Lebanese political system did not offer sufficient incentive for Hizballah to disband its military wing.

Secondly, Hizballah's internal party structure is far from democratic. It is rigid and unchanging and a new generation of leaders has not emerged. Instead, Hizballah's original leaders continue to make decisions for the group, ensuring that civil war thinking and strategies have remained standard practice. The failure to put distance between Hizballah's military and political wings has ensured that the group's military capacity remained central to the group's identity and conception of its own political aims. The *Shura* Council's decision to utilise civil war-era methods in Syria in 2013 at a time of comparative peace in Lebanon, points to this fatal consequences of generational and institutional change in Hizballah.

Thirdly, although Hizballah underwent an ideological transformation where its goals were aligned to the Lebanese political system and justifiable to its citizens, Hizballah's constituents' continued acceptance of violence gave Hizballah little incentive to disarm. Moreover, the tacit agreement of the Lebanese state and the population provided the militia with a modicum of democratic sanction, leaving Hizballah with a latent violent capacity if it was under threat. In this way, it had more options than regular political parties, who have no choice but to fight for their interests within democratic norms. Therefore, while Hizballah's ideological foundation fulfilled Schwedler's criteria for wide boundaries of justifiable action, it was the willingness of Hizballah's constituents to accept undemocratic behaviourthat ultimately undermined its commitment to democracy. It is therefore no surprise that in 2008 Hizballah used its militia against the Lebanese state and in 2013 it used the militia to influence wider regional events, demonstrating that it never genuinely surrendered to democratic rules, and always viewed its weapons as part of its political playbook.

Finally, Hizballah's external patrons provided the critical impetus to

its decision to become involved in Syria. The potential for Hizballah to lose its supply chain if the Assad regime collapsed provided the ultimate test of the group's commitment to Lebanon. Hizballah's ongoing relationship with its two patrons therefore gave it obligations and independence beyond the Lebanese political arena, ensuring that it always kept one eye on regional events, as they too directly influenced the group's likelihood of survival.

The Syrian war has convincingly demonstrated the limits of Hizballah's democratic transformation, as explained through Schwedler's analysis. The existential threat to Hizballah forced it to act outside the democratic framework where it had seated itself since the end of the civil war. In this way, Hizballah's largely moderated behaviour between 1992 and 2008 became irrelevant because it had taken place in an environment where Hizballah was not seriously threatened. Now that the group has faced existential challenge, it has clearly demonstrated that its military capabilities remain its number one priority, proving the fatal limitation of its so-called transformation.

Bibliography

"Lebanon rivals agree crisis deal", *BBC News*, 21 May 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7411835.stm.

"Hezbollah leader demands veto power", *The Associated Press*, 1 April 2008.

"More Hezbollah fighters killed in Syria buried in Lebanon", *Ya Libnan*, 8 April 2013, http://www.yalibnan.com/2013/04/08/more-hezbollah-fighters-killed-in-syria-to-be-buried-in-lebanon/

"Reports: Syrian Troops, Hezbollah consolidate gains in Homs", *VOA News*, 28 July 2013, http://www.voanews.com/content/report-says-syrian-troops-hezbollah-consolidate-gains-in-homs/1711770.html.

"Syria: Hezbollah triumphs, but loses veterans", *UPI*, 30 May 2013, http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2013/05/30/Syria-Hezbollah-triumphs-but-loses-veterans/UPI-98951369939886/.

"Thailand arrests Hezbollah suspect after US Bangkok alert", *BBC News Asia*, 13 January 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16543447.

"The Taif Agreement," United Nations, http://www.un.int/wcm/webdav/site/lebanon/shared/documents/Constitution/The%20Taif%20Agreement%20%28English%20Version%29%20.pdf

"U.S. diplomat blasts Hezbollah over role in Syria war", CBS News, 1 July 2013, http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202_162-57591762/u.s-diplomat-blasts-hezbollah-over-role-in-syria-war/

Alagha, J., *Hizbullah's documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011).

_____,*The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology and Political Program*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

Azani, E. "Hezbollah – a global terrorist organization – situationalreport as of September 2006", Submission to the US House Committee on International Relations – Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, 28 September 2006.

Blanford, N., "Accusations mount of Hezbollah fighting in Syria", *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 October 2012, http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/1015/Accusations-mount-of-Hezbollah-fighting-in-Syria.

_____, "Did Hezbollah kill Hariri?", *Foreign Policy*, 1 April 2010, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/04/01/did_hezbollah_kill_hariri.

_____, "Irritating Israel", *Bitter Lemons,* Vol. 36, http://www.bitterlemons-international.org/inside.php?id=233

_____, "Israel scrables aircraft as Lebanon hears news", *The Times*, 5 November 2004.

Blondel, J., *Political parties: a genuine case for discontent?*, (London: Wildwood House, 1978)

Brafman Kittner, C., "The role of safe havens in Islamist terrorism", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2007.

Chartouni-Dubarry, M., "Hizballah: from militia to political party", in R. Hollis & N. Shehadi (eds.) *Lebanon on Hold: Implications for Middle East Peace,* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996).

Conan, N., "Who is Hezbollah", *NPR: Talk of the Nation*, 19 July 2006, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5568093 (Accessed 1March 2008).

Deeb, L., "Hizballah: A primer", *Middle East Report Online*, 31st July 2006.

Democracy Reporting International, *Lebanon: Assessment of the Electoral Framework: Election Law of 2008*, (Berlin/Beirut: Democracy Reporting International, 2008).

Devore, M., "Exploring the Iran-Hezbollah relationship: A case study of how state sponsorship affects terrorist group decision-making", *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 6, No. 4-5, 2012.

El Khazen, F., "Political parties in postwar Lebanon: Parties in search of partisans", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 4, 2003.

Ezani, E., "Hezbollah's strategy of "walking on the edge": Between political game and political violence", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 35, No.11, 2011.

Fattah, H., "Hezbollah leads huge pro-Syrian protest in central Beirut", *The New York Times*, 8 March 2005.

Gambill, G. & Abdelnour, Z., "Hezbollah: Between Tehran and Damascus", *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2002.

Gleis, J. & Berti, B., *Hezbollah and Hamas: A comparative study*, *(*Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

Gunning J., "Hizballah and the logic of political participation" in Heiberg, M., O'Leary, B. & Tirman, J. (eds.), *Terror, insurgency and the state: Ending protracted conflicts*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

Hajjar, S., *Hizballah: Terrorism, national liberation or menace?*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2002).

Hamzeh, A., "Lebanon's Hizbullah: From Islamic revolution to parliamentary accommodation", *Third World Quarterly,* Vol. 14, No. 2, 1993.

Hamzeh, A., *In the Path of Hizbullah*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004).

Harel, A., & Issacharoff, A., "Iran pays, Syria smuggles, and Hezbollah receives", *Haaretz*, 14 October 2009.

Harik, J., "Between Islam and the system: Sources and implications of popular support for Lebanon's Hizballah", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 40 No. 1, 1996.

_____, *Hezbollah: The changing face of terrorism*,(New York, IB Tauris, 2005).

Herrick, J., "Nonstate actors: A comparative analysis of change and development within Hamas and Hezbollah" in B. Korany (ed.), *The Changing Middle East*, (New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010).

Horowitz, D., "Constitutional Design: proposals versus processes", Paper presented at the conference 'Constitutional Design 2000: Institutional Design, Conflict Management, and Democracy in the Late Twentieth Century,' Kellogg Institute, University of Notre Dame, December 1999.

Huntington, S., *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late-Twentieth Century,* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

International Crisis Group, "Lebanon: Managing the gathering storm", 5 December 2006. http://www.cggl.org/publicdocs/Lebanon_Managing_the_Gathering_%20Storm.pdf.

Kanter, J. & Rodoren, J., "European Union Adds Military Wing of Hezbollah to List of Terrorist Organizations", *The New York Times*, 23 July 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/23/world/middleeast/european-union-adds-hezbollah-wing-to-terror-list.html?pagewanted=all.

Karakatsanis, N., "Political Learning as a Catalyst of Moderation: Lessons from Democratic Consolidation in Greece", *Democratization*, Vol. 15 No. 2, 2008.

Kirchheimer, O., "Transformation of Party Systems" in Lapalombara, J., &Weiner, M., (eds.),*Political Parties and Political Development*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

Kramer, M., "Hizbullah: The Calculus of Jihad" in Marty, M.& Appleby, R., (eds.), *Fundamentalisms and the State,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Kraiche, D.& Al-Fakih, R., "Ambush targets Hezbollah convoy", *The Daily Star*, 17 July 2013, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2013/Jul-17/223970-ambush-targets-hezbollah-convoy.ashx#axzz2ZNfHqULK.

Lakkis, H., "Christian parties, Hezbollah and Amal firm on Orthodox plan", *The Daily Star*, 25 February 2013, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Opinion/Commentary/2013/Feb-25/207794-christian-parties-hezbollah-and-amal-firm-on-orthodox-plan.ashx

Levitt, M., "Testimony to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Hezbollah: Financing terror through criminal enterprise", Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States Senate, 25 May 2005, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/pdf/hezbollah-testimony-05252005.pdf.

Lijphart, A., "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies", *Journal of Democracy,* Vol. 15 No. 2, 2006.

Macleod, H., "Lebanese declaration threatens civil war", *The Observer*, 11 May 2008.

Mannes, A., Michael, M., Pate, A., Slive, A., Subrahamian, V. & Wilkenfeld, J., *Stochastic Opponent Modeling Agents: A Case Study with Hizbullah*, (College Park: University of Maryland, 2008)

Morris, L., "Hezbollah chief defends group's involvement in Syrian war", *The Washington Post*, 26 May 2013.

Mroue, B. & Karam, Z., "Explosion rocks Hezbollah stronghold in Beirut as Syria's war spills into Lebanon",*The Globe and Mail*, 9 July 2013.

Noe, N., *The relationship between Hizbullah & the United States in light of the current situation in the Middle East,* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2006).

Norton, A., "Hizballah: From Radicalism to Pragmatism?" *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 5No. 12, 1998.

_____,*Hezbollah: A Short History*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007).

_____, *Hizballah of Lebanon: Extremist Ideals vs. Mundane Politics*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999).

Ottoway, M., "Islamists and democracy: Keep the faith", *The New Republic,* 6 June 2005..

Phillips, D., *From Bullets to Ballots: Violent Muslim movements in transition*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009).

Qassem, N.,*Hizbullah: The story from within*, (London: Saqi, 2006).

Ranstorp, M., "The Strategy and Tactics of Hizballah's 'Lebanonisation Process'", *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 3 No. 1, 1998.

Ranstorp, M., *Hizb´Allah in Lebanon: The politics of the Western Hostage Crisis*,(New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

Roumani, R., "Syria's last trump card", *Bitter Lemons*, Vol. 36 No. 2, 2004. http://www.bitterlemons-international.org/inside.php?id=232 (Accessed 4 February 2014)

Saad-Ghorayeb, A., *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion*, (London: Pluto Press, 2002).

Samii, A., "A stable structure on shifting sands: assessing the Hizbullah-Iran-Syria realtionship",*Middle East Journal*, Vol. 62. No.1, 2007.

Sankari, J., *Fadlallah: the making of a radical Shi'ite leader*, (London: Saqi, 2005).

Saouli, A., "Lebanon's Hizbullah: The quest for survival", *World Affairs*, Vol. 166 No. 2.

Schwedler, J., *Faith in moderation: Islamist parties in Jordan and Yemen*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Shanahan, R., *Radical Islamist groups in the modern age: A case study of Hizbullah*, (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Institute, 2003).

_____,*The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics*,(London: I.B. Tauris, 2005).

Sherlock, R., "Clashes in Lebanon as Syria conflict spills over", *The Telegraph,* 24 June 2013.

Snow, D., Rochford, E., Worden, S. & Benford, R., "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 51 No. 4, 1986.

Sobelman, D., "Hizbollah after the Syrian withdrawal",*Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 8 No. 1,2005.

_____, *New rules of the game*, (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 2004).

Statton, A. & Stewart, E., "Violence escalates between Sunni and Shia in Beirut", *The Guardian*, 9 May 2008.

Trendle, G., "The grass roots of success", *The Middle East*, 1 February 1993.

Ward, O., "Syria: How Hezbollah became a game-changer", *The Star*, 23 July 2013, http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/07/23/syria_how_hezbollah_became_a_gamechanger.html.

Wickham, C., "The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's Wasat Party", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2004.

Wittes, T., "Islamist parties: Three kinds of movements", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2008.