

WILĀYAT AL-FAQĪH AND HIZBULLAH'S RELATIONS WITH IRAN

Joseph Alagha

RADBOD UNIVERSITY, NIJMEGEN

Hizbullah in Lebanon has succeeded in employing Imām Khūmaynī's theory of *wilāyat al-faqīh* ('the guardianship of the jurist') as a cornerstone in its politico-religious ideology from 1978, molding, interpreting and adapting the original theory to suit Lebanese social and political conditions. In order to negotiate successive changes in the political system, Hizbullah has shifted its ideology to become a key player affecting the dynamic changes taking place in the Lebanese public sphere. However, it is assumed in many circles that Hizbullah is the proxy of Syria and Iran. Concentrating on the presumed Iranian influence, this article argues that Hizbullah has instead pursued an independent course of action in its attempt to influence the political system of Lebanon.

Introduction

Most political commentators regard Iran along with its 'brain child', the Lebanese resistance movement Hizbullah, as having militant revolutionary tendencies. Many would argue that these do not conform to the international community's standards of democratic values that govern civil society. But how should the complex relationships between Hizbullah and Iran be understood? Is Hizbullah an Iranian party operating in Lebanon? Or is it a militant Lebanese party supported by Iran, which has to obey it and be its tool of foreign policy?

Hizbullah has been able to modify its identity from its origins as an Islamic movement of social and political protest (1978–1985), to a full-pledged social movement (1985–1991), to a parliamentary political party (1992 to the present). It has tried to preserve its Islamic identity and at the same time work within the confines of the Lebanese political system. On these grounds, the Party recognized the Lebanese state. In spite of being perceived as having a political and strategic partnership with Syria,¹ and a strategic and ideological alliance with Iran,² Hizbullah is

¹ 'We emphasize the need to adhere to the distinguished relations between Lebanon and Syria as a common political, security, and economic need, dictated by the interests of the two countries and two peoples, by the imperatives of geopolitics and the requirements for Lebanese stability and facing common challenges. We also call for an end to all the negative sentiment that have marred bilateral ties in the past few years and urge these relations to return to

arguably not merely an instrument of policy in Syrian and Iranian hands. Rather, the Party has pursued an independent course of decision making in conformity with the specificities (*khūṣūṣiyyāt*) of the Lebanese political equation, until it succeeded in May 2008 in obtaining veto power in the Cabinet, the Council of Ministers (the main executive body of the country), thus controlling the political system to a greater extent. After its defeat in the June 2009 legislative elections, it backtracked and contented itself with participation with two ministers in a power-sharing cabinet, waiving its earlier gain of veto power for the sake of consensual democracy, as it revealed in its 2009 Manifesto.

After three decades of the ‘victory’ of the Islamic Revolution in Iran it is worth returning to the question of how Imām Khūmaynī’s initial theory of *wilāyat al-faqīh* (‘the guardianship of the jurisprudent’ or ‘jurisconsult’) has developed in the political thought of the Lebanese Hizbullah, particularly within the framework of molding and interpreting the original theory to make it adaptable to the Lebanese social and political conditions. In the 1980s, Hizbullah regarded *wilāyat al-faqīh*, as defined by Khūmaynī, as its true Islamic cultural identity and adopted it in its original formulation under the motto of ‘The Islamic Revolution in Lebanon’. Hizbullah recognized Khūmaynī as the official *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* (religious–legal authority of emulation) of the Islamic Republic and as the first *faqīh* (jurisprudent, jurisconsult) after *al-ghayba al-kubrā* (‘the Great Occultation’), and in contemporary history, to assume the title of the deputy of Imām al-Mahdī and to establish an Islamic state. As such, Hizbullah followed the religious authority of Iran and paid homage and allegiance to Khūmaynī as the political and religious leader of the *Umma*, and abided by his *wilāyat al-faqīh* as a major pillar in its

their normal status as soon as possible.’ For this, see Hizbullah’s 30 November 2009 Manifesto, Chapter II: ‘Lebanon’, Section 5: ‘Lebanon and the Arab Ties.’ *Al-Intiqād* (4 December 2009), 5, www.alintiqad.com/uploaded/mag/intiqad.html [accessed 1 January 2010].

² ‘Hizbullah considers Iran as a central state in the Muslim world, since, through its revolution, it ousted the Shah’s regime and its American–‘Israeli’ projects. Iran is also the state that supported the resistance movements in the Middle East, and stood with courage and determination at the side of the Arab and Islamic causes and especially the Palestinian one...The response to such actions should be co-operation, brotherhood, and a centre of awakening and strategic weight, as well as a model for independence and liberty that supports the Arab-Islamic project. Iran should be viewed as a power that boosts the strength and might of the people of our region. Ibid., Chapter II, Section 6: ‘Lebanon and Islamic Relations.’ *Al-Intiqād* (4 December 2009), 6.

politico-religious ideology. Hizbullah clarified that, from a religious and ideological stance, it regarded Khūmaynī with high esteem. Indeed, after his death, the same allegiance and respect was accorded to Khāminā'ī, his officially chosen successor. In the Lebanese context, Hizbullah based its argument on demographic realities (for example, that the Muslims constitute the majority of the population) and proposed that Lebanon becomes part of a wider Islamic state. Hizbullah's cadres argued for the necessity of establishing an Islamic order, stressing that social change must begin from the top by changing the political system and annihilating the ruling elite through a top-down revolutionary process.

With the end of fifteen-year Civil War in 1990, Hizbullah's post-Ṭā'if discourse continues to portray a different image of its buttressing of civil society and democratic processes that encourage more social and political integration, rather than violence. Although the liberalization process in Iran might have affected Hizbullah's policies, it does not appear to have done so at the expense of Hizbullah's autonomy of decision-making or their place in specifically Lebanese contexts. So, is the Lebanese political structure forcing Hizbullah to take decisions that are not popular to the rank, file and leaders? Is the Lebanese public sphere dictating a new strategy on Hizbullah, or is it transnational influences from Iran, or a mix of both?

At the beginning of the 1990s, Hizbullah portrayed a post-Islamist phase moving from exclusion to inclusion through interpreting the doctrine of *wilāyat al-faqīh* in such a way that allows the Party to maintain authority in the Lebanese sectarian–confessional system, apparently without compromising its doctrinal foundations. Employing a bottom-up Islamization strategy⁴, the Party stressed that it ideologically defends the establishment of an Islamic state, but that as a political program this is not practical because of the confessional and sectarian nature of Lebanon, on the one hand, and opposition by the majority of the Lebanese, both Christians and Muslims, on the other. In other words, Hizbullah shelved its political ideology and practised a 'down to earth' political program in an endeavor to reach out to the largest possible sector of the Lebanese populace. This resulted in a dramatic change in

³ The Ṭā'if Agreement, Lebanon's new 1990 constitution, is a 'bill of rights' or a blueprint for national reconciliation and reform aimed towards a more equitable political system for all sectarian–confessional groups.

⁴ It has been aptly argued that post-Islamism is bottom-up Islamization in disguise. For this, see Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam* (New York: Routledge 2007), 343–48.

Hizbullah's involvement in the Lebanese political system as it is. It not only participated in the parliamentary and municipal elections, but also, in 2005, joined the Cabinet.

In order to question the alleged 'democratic character' of political Shī'ism and the 'authoritarian nature' of political Sunnīsm a telling anecdote is first discussion. This is followed by examination of Khūmaynī's 1988 religious edict (*fatwā*), which suggests an authoritarian nature of *wilāyat al-faqīh*. Based on these insights, the article is then divided into three sections demonstrating how Hizbullah employed the *wilāyat al-faqīh* doctrine in Lebanon as a cornerstone in its politico-religious ideology from 1978 to the present, arguing to the contrary of some that the Party pursued an independent course of action in its attempt to control the Lebanese political system.

Michel Foucault in Karbalā'

23 April 2003 coincided with the fortieth day in the commemoration of the 'martyrdom' of Imām Ḥusayn at Karbalā' in 61AH/680AD. It was the first time in more than thirty-five years that Iraqi Shī'ites were free to participate in the pilgrimage to the holy city of Karbalā'. A sea of people estimated to be at least a million celebrated the occasion. Ritual is indeed a construction of the sacred:⁵ the barefooted pilgrims beat their chests, slashed their scalps with swords, and whipped themselves with chains. They were not alone: Michel Foucault was also there.⁶

Foucault's reading of the Islamic Revolution is noteworthy since he saw in it a spiritual-esoteric dimension embedded in the heart of the political realm, in the sense that spiritualism takes from politics an eventuality or a place in which to ferment. It seems that Foucault judged rather hastily his reading and vision of the Revolution when he made the analogy between democracy and Shī'ism, on the one hand, and Sunnīsm and tyranny, on the other. Not only that, Foucault considered that there are safeguards militating against the Shī'ite '*ulamā'*'—the leaders of the theoretic republic—from transforming it into tyranny. However, these bones of contention should not prevent the reader from seeing Foucault's new vision at the time: namely, his innovation of the concept of 'political spiritualism.'

According to Foucault, this is based on the premise that the esoteric

⁵ J. Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

⁶ In 1978, Foucault reported on the Iranian Revolution by writing articles for *La Corriere della Sera*.

dimension of the Revolution would, in the end, outweigh its exoteric aspect, especially since the ‘holy commemorative dimension’ and ‘political opposition’ are intertwined. Foucault not only considered Shī‘ism to be an ideological tool used by revolutionaries against the authority⁷, but also to be rooted in resistance and opposition to power and tyranny as such. He contended that Shī‘ism contains a political stance different from any other because it is based on the desire of the self to be completely ‘different from what it is now’.⁸ Foucault’s religious discourse gives room for humanistic ambitions since these ambitions are not only economical or nationalistic, but also based on a metaphysical dimension. This explains, across Shī‘ite history, the transformation of mobilization to a political force, which became a model for an ‘extreme desire’ in social and organic solidarity, in the Durkheimian sense. The Islamic Revolution afforded fundamental importance to the Foucaultian problematic, even if it later on took a different twist to his original expectations.

But what can be expected today from the Karbalā³ populace? Could there be any materialization of either the esoteric dimension or ‘political spiritualism?’ On this occasion, Sayyid Ḥasan Naṣr Allāh, Hizbullah’s Secretary General, argued, ‘The US wants us to witness only defeat’, insinuating that the Karbalā³ populace would mark a ‘spirited resistance’ to American presence in Iraq.⁹ It is most likely that the aforementioned statement could be construed along the lines of Foucault’s notions. Not surprisingly every year, Naṣr Allāh’s ‘*Āshūrā*’ discourse makes reference to the esoteric dimension, especially spiritualism. In January 2009, he invoked what remains of God on earth: ‘*yā baqiyya min Allāh ‘alā l-ard.*’

The interpretation of wilāyat al-faqīh: Khūmaynī’s 1988 fatwā

During Khūmaynī’s final days, there appeared an emerging problem vis-à-vis the prerogatives of the jurisprudent (*al-waliyy al-faqīh*)¹⁰. Sayyid ‘Alī Khāminā‘ī, the president of the Islamic Republic at the time and the current *faqīh*, declared in his Friday speech of 31 December 1988 his

⁷ Authority is power that has been institutionalized and is recognized by the people over whom it is exercised.

⁸ Georg Stauth, *Revolution in Spiritless Times: An Essay on the Inquiries of Michel Foucault on the Iranian Revolution*. (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 1991).

⁹ See Naṣr Allāh’s speech delivered in South Beirut in order to mark the fortieth day anniversary following the death of Imām Ḥusayn.

¹⁰ Henceforth, *al-waliyy al-faqīh* will be referred to as *faqīh*.

condemnation of the expanded prerogatives of the Minister of Labor, thus indirectly criticizing the theory of absolute *wilāya* (*al-wilāya al-muṭlaqa*) or the comprehensive authority of the *faqīh*.¹¹ Khāminā³ī claimed instead that this was something separate from the function of the state. He added that it is still unclear, even to those who were supposed to preach it, let alone to rule according to it. The incident outraged Khūmaynī and prompted him to write a letter aimed at clarifying and defending his theory, thus introducing new prerogatives pertaining to the space of authority to which the *faqīh* is entitled.

Among other things, in his *fatwā* Khūmaynī stressed that ‘it is incumbent upon me to clarify that government branches from the Prophet’s absolute *wilāya* and is one of the primary injunctions of Islam, thus it takes precedence over all secondary ordinances, even over prayer, pilgrimage, and fasting...the government can one-sidedly annul any *sharī‘ī* [religious] treaties conducted with the populace, if it considers it in opposition to the interests [*maṣāliḥ*, sing. *maṣlaḥa*] of the *Umma* or Islam. Further, the government could thwart any religious or non-religious practice if it regards it as detrimental to the interests of Islam or if it deems it so’.¹²

Therefore, Khūmaynī stipulated that the *maṣlaḥa* of the Islamic order, or its agencies, gains priority over any other principle in social and political affairs. As such, Khūmaynī developed the theory of absolute *wilāya* in a way that could perfectly serve his political ends through giving the *faqīh* absolute political and religious power. Khūmaynī’s innovation was to transform the *wilāyat al-faqīh* unequivocally and cogently into a system of political administration. Thus, Khūmaynī in his capacity as the *faqīh* and *marja‘ al-taqlīd*, blended Imāmate with *wilāya* and *marja‘iyya* (religious authority), which is a precedent in Shī‘īte politico-religious ideology. This is of vital importance since in Shī‘īte jurisprudence ‘the ruler’s injunction abrogates the jurist’s *fatwā*’ (*ḥukum al-ḥākim yanquḍ fatwā l-mujtahid*), if the *maṣlaḥa* of the Islamic order requires such a course of action.¹³ Thus, Khūmaynī believed in, and practised, absolute *wilāya*. And so, it seems that Khūmaynī’s 1988 *fatwā* qualified Foucault’s claim of democratic aspects and lack of tyranny in political Shī‘īsm.

¹¹ 10 *Jumādā l-Awwal* 1409 AH.

¹² See Khūmaynī’s letter to Khāminā³ī concerning the latter’s Friday speech on the absoluteness of *wilāyat al-faqīh*. Published in Farsi in *Kayhān* 13223, 16 *Jumādā l-Awwal* 1409/ 6 January 1989.

¹³ Personal interview with Sayyid Ibrāhīm al-Mūsawī, 12 July 2004.

First stage (1978–1985): wilāyat al-faqīh

Khūmaynī's *wilāyat al-faqīh* was successfully imported to Lebanon, serving as a blueprint of a progressive Islamic state that was closely emulated by Hizbullah in its constituencies. Illustrating the vital importance given to becoming a member of 'Ummat Hizbullah', a Hizbullah cadre source reported to me, on condition of anonymity, that a person, who tried to join the Party but failed three times the process of screening (*ta'fīr*) that Hizbullah's prospective members undergo, came with a bomb and blew his recruiting officer to pieces. Another member told me that as practice of indoctrination and as a baptism/initiation ceremony, new Hizbullah recruits had to repeatedly state: 'If the Jurisprudent tells you to kill yourself, then you do it' (*idhā qāla laka al-waliyy al-faqīh °an °uqtul nafsak, fa-°alayka dhālik*). This not only illustrates indoctrination, but also the total obedience to the *faqīh*.¹⁴

In the early 1980s, Khūmaynī instructed Khāminā'ī, who was at the time Deputy Minister of Defense, to take full responsibility of the Lebanese Hizbullah. Since then, Khāminā'ī became Hizbullah's patron figure. That is why, since its inception, Hizbullah, based on a religious and ideological stance, fully abides by the ideas and opinions of Khūmaynī as communicated by Khāminā'ī. During that period, the religious and ideological bonds between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Lebanon could be examined from the following declarations by Hizbullah and Iranian officials. Shaykh Ḥasan Ṭrād: 'Iran and Lebanon are one people in one country'; Sayyid Ibrāhīm Amīn al-Sayyid: 'We do not say that we are part of Iran, we are Iran in Lebanon and Lebanon in Iran'; °Alī Akbar Muḥtashamī: 'We are going to support Lebanon politically and militarily as we buttress one of our own Iranian districts'; Shaykh Ḥasan Surūr: 'We declare to the whole world that the Islamic Republic of Iran is our mother, religion, *Ka°ba*, and our veins'.¹⁵

Second Stage (1985–1991): wilāyat al-faqīh

In stages one and two, Hizbullah argued that during the early phase of its formation, it needed a unifying politico-religious ideology, rather than an elaborate political program. So Hizbullah based itself on *wilāyat al-faqīh* and regarded Khūmaynī as the jurisconsult of *all* Muslims.¹⁶ In stage one, Hizbullah was, ideologically, completely dependent on

¹⁴ Personal interviews with N. Mahdī and S. °Abd Allāh on 21 and 25 October 2004 respectively.

¹⁵ *Al-°Ahd* 8 (21 *Dhū l-Qida* 1404/ 17 August 1984), p. 6.

¹⁶ Naṣr Allāh, *NBN*, 21 July 2002.

Khūmaynī. In stage two this dependency witnessed some leeway in the sense that Hizbullah did not blindly follow the Iranian regime. Rather, it had some specificity (*khūṣūṣiyya*), since in his capacity as the Supreme Leader (*Raḥbar*) he was endowed with the sole right to determine the legitimacy (i.e. valid authority) of Hizbullah. Khūmaynī highlighted certain precepts within which Hizbullah could move freely. However, he left their implementation to the Party's discretion. Thus, although Hizbullah was ideologically dependent on the Iranian regime, it had some room to maneuver in its decisions pertaining to some cases in Lebanese domestic issues. Even though the multiplicity of *marja*^cs among the Shī^cites continued after Khūmaynī's death, in Hizbullah's case the issue of *marja*^c*iyya* has been determined on the doctrinal–ideological basis of following the official *marja*^c *al-taqlīd*, who is recognized by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Thus, Hizbullah's religious authority was, still is, and will continue to be the Iranian *faqīh*. This made the transition after Khūmaynī's death smoother in the end of the second stage and the beginning of the third stage.

Islamic state in relation to wilāyat al-faqīh (stages I and II)

In the first and second stages (1978–1991), Hizbullah considered that the Qur^ʿān is the constitution of the Muslim *Umma*, and Islam is both a religious and a governmental order (*dīn wa-dawla*). Hizbullah enjoined the Muslims to strive, using all legitimate means, in order to implement the Islamic order, wherever they are.¹⁷

In stages one and two, Hizbullah considered the Lebanese political system, which is dominated by the political Maronites,¹⁸ as a *jāhili* (pre-

¹⁷ See for instance, °Alī al-Kūranī, *Ṭarīqat Hizbullah fī l-°amal al-Islāmī [Hizbullah's Method of Islamic Mobilization]* (Tehran, Maktab al-I[°]lām al-Islāmī: al-Mū[°]assa al-°Ālamiyya, 1985). Also, Muḥammad Za[°]aytir, *Nazra °alā tarḥ al-Jumhūrīyya al-Islamiyya fī Lubnān [An Outlook at the Proposal of the Islamic Republic in Lebanon]* (Beirut: al-Wikāla al-sharqiyya li-l-tawzī[°], 1988).

¹⁸ The National Pact of 1943, which is an oral agreement not drafted in the 1926 Constitution, stipulated that the Prime Minister (PM) be Sunnī Muslim, the Speaker Shī^cite, and the following Maronites: The President of the Republic; the Commander of the Army; the Governor of the Central Bank (BDL); and the Head of the Labor Unions (GLC). However, article 95 of Section 6 of the 1943 Constitution—which was amended by a constitutional law issued on 9 November 1943—gave some hope for the Shī^cites of a fairer representation in the future: ‘Temporarily and from the stance of justice and national reconciliation, the sects are represented in a just manner in public employment and in the formation of the Council of Ministers, without harming

Islamic pagan) system. Hizbullah applied this classification to any non-Islamic system, be it patriotic, democratic, or nationalistic, even if governed by Muslims.¹⁹ In other words, in the first and second stages, Hizbullah pursued the establishment of an Islamic state respectively from the perspective of religious and political ideology. Religious ideology, as Hizbullah's leading cadres argued, was to instate God's sovereignty and divine governance on earth through *ḥākimiyya* and the execution of God's law by instituting an Islamic order as a *taklīf sharʿī* (religious and legal obligation).²⁰ As a political ideology, Hizbullah did not want to impose the Islamic order by force unless an overwhelming majority of the Lebanese voted in its favor through a referendum. This should be taken with caution since Hizbullah's rhetoric, in stages one and two, was different from what it was doing in reality, in the sense of being actively engaged in preparing the ground for the establishment of an Islamic order, at least in its constituencies.

Third Stage (1992 to the present): wilāyat al-faqīh

1992 was a pivotal year for Hizbullah's evolving identity. The Party faced a challenge in deciding whether to participate in the parliamentary elections or not. Hizbullah's twelve-member committee took a positive decision after much heated internal debate and discussions²¹, followed by Iranian arbitration (*tahkīm*). Since the *faqīh* is the one who determines 'legitimacy' (even in practical political matters), Khāmināʾī had to intercede and grant legitimacy for participation.²² This caused a considerable schism in Hizbullah because Ṣubḥī al-Ṭufayyī, Hizbullah's

state interest.' Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology*, 23.

¹⁹ Muḥammad Zaʿaytir, *Al-Mashrūʿ al-Mārūnī fī Lubnān: judhūruhu wa-taṭawwūrātuhu [The Maronite Project in Lebanon: Roots and Development]*. Beirut: al-Wikāla al-sharqiyya li-l-tawzīʿ, 1986. This work is banned in Lebanon.

²⁰ One should bear in mind that the concepts of *jāhiliyya* and *ḥākimiyya* constitute a common denominator among many Islamic movements, and, as such, are not exclusively a Hizbullah notion.

²¹ Based on interviews and fieldwork observations by the author, it could be fairly stated that the majority of Hizbullah's cadres consider disagreements in religious and political opinions and viewpoints of the leaders to be a phenomenon that represents a healthy, 'democratic' atmosphere. However, strict obedience and discipline prevents disagreements from festering into discord, al-Ṭufayyī's case being an exception.

²² Since *wilāyat al-faqīh* was being applied in a multi-confessional, multi-religious society.

first secretary general, contested the decision and pursued a confrontational stance with both the Party and the Lebanese state.²³

By interpreting the doctrine of *wilāyat al-faqīh* in a new light, the committee recommended that participation in the elections is a beneficiary necessity, which is in harmony with Hizbullah's holistic vision that favors meeting the expectations of the people by serving their socio-economic and political interests. It added that Hizbullah's greater *jihād* and dedication to addressing the plight of the people does not contradict its priority of smaller military *jihād* for the sake of liberation of occupied land. As such, participating in the elections leads to the achievement of good political results, and is also regarded as a leading step towards interaction with others. By this, Hizbullah presents a novel experience in the *infitāh* ('opening up') of a young Islamic party. The committee stressed that this participation is in accordance with the Lebanese specificities as well as the nature of the proposed elections, which allow for a considerable margin of freedom of choice. In short, the committee concluded that the sum total of the pros (*maṣāliḥ*) outweighs the cons (*maḥāsib*) by far. That is why participation in the parliament is worthwhile since it is viewed as one of the ways of influencing change and making Hizbullah's voice heard, not only domestically, but also regionally and internationally through the platforms made available to the members of parliament.²⁴ Thus, it seems that Hizbullah was forced by the political circumstances, the Tā'if Agreement, Lebanon's new 1990 constitution, and the end of the Civil War, to change to a new phase in its history by propagating a matter of fact political program and by co-opting with the Lebanese system.

*Hizbullah's decision-making and finances: NGOs and civil institutions*²⁵
A further shift occurred in the interpretation of the authority of the *faqīh*

²³ Al-Ṭufayyilī held a high post in the leadership of Hizbullah in the early 1980s. But he later created a minor dissent in the party for reasons that, apparently, were social but, in fact, were for control of the Ba'lbakk region. Al-Ṭufayyilī today represents that category of Hizbullah which still upholds the Iranian revolutionary ideology of the 1980s.

²⁴ Na'im Qāsim, *Hizbullah: Al-Minhāj, Al-Tajriba, Al-Mustaqbal* [*Hizbullah: The Curriculum, the Experience, the Future*] (Beirut: Dār al-hādī, 2002), 267–73.

²⁵ For a detailed account of Hizbullah's social services, see Joseph Alagha and Myriam Catusse, 'Les services sociaux de Hezbollah: Effort de guerre, ethos religieux et ressources politiques', in *Le Hezbollah: État des lieux*, ed. Sabrina Mervin (Paris: Actes Sud, 2008), 117–40.

in the third stage when Hizbullah argued that it did not consider the regime in the Islamic Republic of Iran as the jurisconsult of all Muslims, and in consequence, not all Islamic movements have to abide by the orders and directives of the *faqīh* or the regime.²⁶ Another shift occurred, when, in May 1995, Khāminā³ī appointed Naṣr Allāh, and Shaykh Muḥammad Yazbik, head of the Religious–Judicial Council, as his religious deputies (*wakīlayn shar^ciyyan*) in Lebanon. This move granted Hizbullah special prerogatives and delegated responsibilities (*taklīf shar^cī*) that reflect a great independence in practical performance. Thus, Hizbullah consolidated its financial resources since the religious tax of one-fifth (*khums*) imposed on those Lebanese Shī^cītes who follow Khāminā³ī as their authority of emulation (*marja^c*), as well as their alms (*zakāt*) and religious (*shar^cī*) monies have poured directly into Hizbullah coffers instead of being channeled through Iran, as had been the case. Even before 1995, these revenues had allowed Hizbullah to fund an efficient network of NGOs and social welfare institutions that are open to the public, irrespective of communal origin. These include: The Martyr’s Association, The Association of the Wounded, The Association of Lebanese Prisoners²⁷, The Islamic Resistance Support Association, The Institution of the Good Loan, The Association of Islamic Health, The Institution of Construction and Development, The Association of the Relief Committees of Imām Khūmaynī, and The Association of Islamic Pedagogy and Education. All were established during the period 1982–1991. In addition, Hizbullah boasts its own media and research institutions. Its weekly mouthpiece *al-^cAhd*, established in 1984, was renamed *al-Intiqād*²⁸ in 2001); it founded *Baqiyyat Allāh* Journal in

²⁶ Naṣr Allāh, *NBN*, 4 August 2002.

²⁷ For information in English, Arabic, Hebrew, and French on the Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails see www.samirkuntar.org [accessed 1 January 2010], which was officially launched on 19 April 2007.

²⁸ *Al-Intiqād* is Hizbullah’s official mouthpiece and weekly newspaper. It was established on June 18, 1984 as *al-^cAhd*, but changed its name and orientation in 2001, thus conveying a ‘secular’ image by dropping the Quranic substantiation (Q. 5:56), on the right side, and removing the portrait of Khūmaynī and Khāminā³ī, on the left side. The last issue of *al-^cAhd* was number 896, dated 6 April 2001 or 12 *Muharram* 1422 AH; the first issue of *al-Intiqād* was number 897, dated 20 April 2001 or 26 *Muharram* 1422 AH. The last hard-copy issue of *al-Intiqād* was number 1267, dated 30 May 2008. Since number 1268 dated 6 June 2008 *Al-Intiqād* was only available electronically and initially published bi-weekly on Fridays and Tuesdays until it settled as a Friday weekly once more. See www.alintiqad.com [accessed 1 January 2010]

1991 in the aim of inculcating Islamic values and culture. Its think-tank, the Consultative Centre for Studies and Documentation (CCSD), and its *al-Nour* satellite radio station were both founded in 1988. The flagship *al-Manār* TV,²⁹ the only satellite channel belonging to an Islamist movement in the Middle East, had eighteen million subscribers in 2009.³⁰

The interpretation of authority took another shift after the Syrian withdrawal in April 2005. In conformity with its policy to change when circumstances change, Hizbullah seems to switch from Iranian to local authority when it suited its purposes. Although the watershed decision to participate in the Lebanese Cabinet ideologically requires the *sharʿī* judgment and legitimacy of the *faqīh*, Hizbullah set a precedent by apparently securing legitimacy from Shaykh ʿAfīf al-Nābulṣī³¹—the ‘Head of the Association of Shīʿīte Religious Scholars of Mount ʿĀmil’ (*Raʾīs hayʾat ʿulamāʾ Jabal ʿĀmil*)³² in south Lebanon—and not

²⁹ *Al-Manār* literally means ‘The Lighthouse’. It is probably named after the journal of Lebanese reformist Shaykh Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā’s (1865–1935), which circulated from Indonesia to Morocco without interruption for thirty-seven years (1898–1935). It was an influential platform for the Muslims to express their ideas on modernity and modernism in the form of *fatwās*. Indeed, *al-Manār* was a treasure trove of Islamic subjects where almost every problem of modernity was discussed. As such, it was the most influential instrument of modern change. Hizbullah’s *al-Manār* aspires to achieve the same standing.

³⁰ This number reflects legitimate cable subscribers. It is estimated that at least eight million watched *al-Manār* through pirated techniques.

³¹ Nābulṣī is not a Hizbullah member, rather a local influential cleric revered by the Party. In 1982, he was one of the participants in the ‘Conference of the Oppressed’ presided by Khūmaynī. It worth mentioning that after the five Shīʿīte ministers—including the two from Hizbullah—suspended their membership in the Lebanese Cabinet for seven weeks as of 12 December 2005, Nābulṣī, not Naṣr Allāh, issued a *fatwā* barring any other Shīʿīte from joining the Cabinet in their absence. See Lebanese daily newspapers of 21 December 2005.

³² *Jabal ʿĀmil*—the stronghold of Shīʿīsm in Lebanon and an important Shīʿīte center of higher learning—has an important moral significance being the birth place of imminent *ḥadīth* scholar, al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1104 AH/1692 AD), who compiled the canonical volumes of Shīʿīte *ḥadīth*. See Al-Shaykh Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʾil al-Shīʿa [Shīʿīte Rituals]* (Beirut: Mūʿassat al-ḥulūl, bayt ihyāʾ al-turāth, 1993). For a closer look at the instrumental role of the *Jabal ʿĀmil ʿulamāʾ* in converting the majority of the Iranians from Sunnīsm to Shīʿīsm at the outset of the Safavid period, see Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah’s Ideology*, 20ff.

Khāminā'ī, which indicates more independence in decision-making. Thus, Hizbullah heeds Lebanese religious authority in addition to the Iranian one. Therefore, Hizbullah's participation in the Lebanese Cabinet has been relegated to an administrative matter on which Hizbullah's leadership is capable of taking an independent decision. Instantly, Hizbullah joined the Cabinet with two ministers and proliferated in Lebanese state institutions and administrative structure just before the conservative Iranian president, Mahmud Aḥmadī Nejad, and his government were sworn to power in Iran. This led to increased Lebanonization that is more in line with the specificities of Lebanese society, rather than blind adherence to Iran. And so, Hizbullah moved from complete ideological dependency on Khūmaynī in the first stage to less dependency after his death in the second stage. Finally, in the third stage, Hizbullah gained more independence in decision-making, not only in practical political issues, but also in military and doctrinal issues, to the extent that it seems as if Hizbullah exercised almost independent decision-making, at least in some cases. Even in military matters, Hizbullah does not always heed Iranian orders if they do not serve its overall interest (*maṣlahā*). Two cases in point that illustrate this trend are Sharon's April 2002 West Bank counterterrorism offensive, and Barak's 'Operation Cast Lead' in Gaza between December 2008 and January 2009. Iran strongly urged Hizbullah to open the northern front across the Lebanese-Israeli border in order to release pressure on the Palestinians, but Hizbullah adamantly refused because such a move is considered detrimental to its national interest.³³ This trend continued after Aḥmadī

³³ In order to preserve the clam with Israel, Hizbullah neither hesitates to apprehend Palestinian fighters or al-Qaeda affiliated militants who attempt to target northern Israel with rockets, nor to stop anyone attempting to attack Israel, even by force. Also Hizbullah informs UNIFIL and the Lebanese Army of any rocket it discovers set to be fired at Israel, so that it could be defused immediately. On these grounds, Ṣubḥī al-Ṭufayyī mocked Hizbullah for protecting the borders of Israel and criticized Iran for serving the interests of the US, as he contended. See Thā'ir 'Abbās's interview with Ṣubḥī al-Ṭufayyī in *al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ* 9067 (25 September 2003). Interestingly, Hizbullah has erected two pillars (like the one in *Minā*, Saudi Arabia where Muslims perform the symbolic, ritual stoning of Satan during the *hajj*) near the Fatima Gate bordering Israel for the ritual stoning of the 'Little Satan' (Israel) and the 'Great Satan' (US), so that people will not throw rocks at the Israeli soldiers across the border. In order to preserve the status quo ante, Hizbullah does even tolerate the throwing of rocks across the broader. It is also noteworthy that Hizbullah's 2009 Manifesto makes no mention of the ideological concepts of the 'Little

Nejad won a second term in the controversial June 2009 presidential elections.

Although Hizbullah was inspired by the Islamic Revolution, it operates like any ordinary political party functioning within a non-Islamic state and a multi-religious confessional and sectarian state. While the Iranian Hizbullah was instrumental in building a state, the Lebanese Hizbullah cannot go beyond being a political party operating within the Lebanese public sphere. That is why, for instance, in the parliamentary elections, Hizbullah reached out and allied itself with secular parties and former enemies on the Lebanese scene, like any political party that accommodated its protest by negotiations and bargaining, making compromises on some doctrinal aspects.

By engaging in a pluralistic process, Hizbullah moved from cooptation to contestation, and finally to exercising empowerment (*tamkīn*). Hizbullah's participation in electoral politics could be regarded as co-opton. The Party's gradual integration in the Lebanese public sphere falls under contestation. Hizbullah's ascendancy to the political scene becoming a nationalistic political party could be viewed from the stance of empowerment.

Lebanonization³⁴ or infitāh

In the first two stages, Hizbullah viewed its mission to liberate Lebanon from the control of political Maronism and the Lebanese sectarian-confessional political system based upon 'situational laws'—(*al-qawānīn al-waḍ'īyya*), that is to say, positive (man-made) laws and legislations such as state constitutions—and establish instead Islamic Sharī'a law, which could only be instated by *ḥākimiyya* through a pure and uncompromising Islamic order. Hizbullah argued that abiding by *al-qawānīn al-waḍ'īyya* instead of Islamic Sharī'a is entirely prohibited both from a religious and political ideological perspective. In stage one, under the influence of Khūmaynī, Hizbullah argued that abiding by *al-qawānīn al-waḍ'īyya* instead of Islamic Sharī'a, is totally un-Islamic.³⁵ In stage two, in line with Khūmaynī, Hizbullah argued that abiding by *al-qawānīn al-waḍ'īyya* instead of Islamic Sharī'a, is the second out of

Satan' and the 'Great Satan'.

³⁴ According to Hizbullah's discourse, Lebanonization refers to the party's integration in the Lebanese public sphere, including the political system and state structures.

³⁵ *Al-Ḥarakāt al-Islāmiyya fī Lubnān [Islamic Movements in Lebanon]* (Beirut: Al-Shirā', 1984), 323–36.

four ways in which colonialism seeks to distort Islam.³⁶

The major shift in the third stage is that Hizbullah became satisfied with *al-qawānīn al-waḍʿiyya* and even contributed to their legislation through its members of parliament. Hizbullah stressed that although the Qurʾān, Sunna, and the Sharīʿa are the sources and bases of legislation, some issues in life could be referred to other sources. This stands in direct contrast to Hizbullah's interpretation of *wilāyat al-faqīh* in the first two stages. Hizbullah argued that the Sharīʿa, as a socially constructed phenomenon, is flexible and can account for all the complexities of modern life. The shift that happened in the third stage could be attributed to the transformation of Iranian politics after the death of Khūmaynī as well as to a change in Hizbullah's own internal dynamics. For instance, there was a clear alteration in the Iranian stance from Khūmaynī's 1986 *fatwā*—which stipulated that the Lebanese system is illegitimate and criminal and Khāmināʾī's argument for the necessity of the Muslims to rule Lebanon since they comprise the majority of the population³⁷—to Khāmināʾī's 1992 ruling in favor of participation in the parliamentary elections, which Hizbullah interpreted as its unequivocal right to proliferate in the Lebanese political system as a whole, including state institutions and administration. As mentioned, Hizbullah made compromises on some doctrinal issues by allying itself, in the legislative and municipal elections, on the same election slate, 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. Thus, Hizbullah compromised its ideology in such a way as to interpret its authority by shelving its demand for the founding an Islamic state, which might seem contradictory to the tenets of *wilāyat al-faqīh*.

Stage three: application of the progressive nature of Shīʿite jurisprudence

Lebanon is our country and the country of our fathers and forefathers; it is also the country of our children and grandchildren and all future

³⁶ Imām Khūmaynī, *Al-Ḥukūma Al-Islāmiyya [Islamic Government]* (Tehran: The Institute of Coordinating and Publishing Imām Khūmaynī's Heritage, 1996), 60ff.

³⁷ Tawfīq al-Madīnī, *Amal wa-Hizbu 'llāh fī-Halabat al-Mujabahāt al-Maḥaliyya wal-Iqlīmiyya [Amal and Hizbullah in the Arena of Domestic and Regional Struggles]* (Damascus: Al-Ahlī, 1999), 162–63; Waddāḥ Sharāra, *Dawlat Hizbullah: Lubnān Mujtamaʿan Islāmiyyan [The State of Hizbullah: Lebanon as an Islamic Society]*. Fourth edition (Beirut: Al-Nahār, 2006), 342.

generations. We want it sovereign, free, independent, strong and unified... we reject partition and federalism.³⁸

Bearing in mind that there are multiple paths of modernity available to the emerging Muslim public sphere leading to the creation of a new civil society where Islamic values can be created and injected into new senses of a public space that is ‘discursive, performative and participative,’³⁹ Naṣr Allāh clarified that Hizbullah benefits from its jurisprudential vision which believes in the doctrine of *wilāyat al-faqīh* that gives it the legitimacy of having a political program in a multi-cultural, multi-religious country that is characterized by pluralist groupings and forces, without encroaching upon its doctrinal-ideological, Islamic convictions.⁴⁰ In May 2008, after the Hizbullah-led opposition gained veto power in the Lebanese Cabinet, Naṣr Allāh reiterated, ‘I am honored to be a member in the party of *wilāyat al-faqīh*. The just, knowledgeable, wise, courageous, righteous, honest, and faithful *faqīh*... *Wilāyat al-faqīh* tells us [i.e. Hizbullah] that Lebanon is a multi-confessional, multi-religious (*mutanawwiʿ, mutaʿadid*) country that you have to preserve and uphold’.⁴¹ With this unshakable commitment to *wilāyat al-faqīh*, Hizbullah reformulated what it meant by an Islamic state by making a categorical distinction between the *al-fīkr al-siyāsī* (political ideology) that it maintained and *al-barnāmaj al-siyāsī* (political program) that it promoted. From an ideological perspective, Hizbullah is committed to an Islamic state, and it will not be dropped as a legal abstraction. However, Hizbullah’s political program has to take into account the political status quo and the overall functioning of the Lebanese political system. Hizbullah characterizes the Lebanese political situation as a complicated mould of sectarian and confessional particulars that prohibit the establishment of an Islamic state, not only from a practical perspective, but also from a doctrinal one. Hizbullah’s political ideology stipulates that an Islamic state should be established on solid foundations having full legitimacy and sovereignty from the people. Since the general will of the Lebanese people is against the

³⁸ Hizbullah’s 30 November 2009 Manifesto, Chapter II: ‘Lebanon’, Section 1: ‘The Homeland.’ *Al-Intiqād* (4 December 2009), 4.

³⁹ Dale Eickelman and Jon Anderson, eds. *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 2.

⁴⁰ Naṣr Allāh as cited by Ḥasan ʿIzz al-Dīn, ‘How is Hizbullah looked upon and how does it introduce itself?’, *Al-Safīr*, 12 November 2001.

⁴¹ *Al-Intiqād* 1267, 30 May 2008.

establishment of an Islamic state, then it is not plausible to establish one.⁴² On 30 November 2009, Hizbullah revealed its new political platform/Manifesto, which mentioned neither the Islamic state nor referred to *wilāyat al-faqīh*. In an answer to a question Naṣr Allāh affirmed that there is no contradiction between belief in *wilāyat al-faqīh*, on the one hand, and the establishment of a strong, institutionalized Lebanese state, on the other. On the contrary, *wilāyat al-faqīh* sanctioned and allowed the Party's integration into the political system. In addition, in line with the Vatican's position and the Papal Guidance, Naṣr Allāh added that Hizbullah believes that Lebanon is a blessing and a message that accomplished great historical achievements. He reiterated Imām Mūsā al-Ṣadr's⁴³ stance that 'Lebanon is the definitive nation to all its citizens (*Lubnān waṭan nihā'i li-jamī' abnā'ihī*)', which is in conformity with the Lebanese constitution.⁴⁴

Thus, Hizbullah shifted its position by its acceptance of, and engagement in, the democratic process under a sectarian–confessional, political and administrative system. More dramatically, Hizbullah's political program modified its demand from the abolition of political sectarianism, to the adoption of the political Maronite discourse, which stresses the abolition of political sectarianism in the mentality, before eradicating it in the texts.⁴⁵ In line with the Tā'if Agreement, its earlier

⁴² Naṣr Allāh, *Al-Jazeera* TV, 24 September 1998; Qasim, *Hizbullah: Al-Manhaj...*, 38; and MP Alī Fayyād, as cited in Fadeel M. Abun-Nasr, *Hizbullah: Ḥaqā'iq wa-Ab'ād [Hizbullah: Facts and Dimensions]* (Beirut: World Book Publishing, 2003), 127.

⁴³ Mūsā al-Ṣadr, one of Hizbullah's ideologues, was a charismatic and distinguished leader, who mobilized the Lebanese Shī'ites in the 1960s and 1970s and was able to channel their grievances into political participation. Al-Ṣadr never called for an Islamic state, rather for equality and social justice among the various denominations within the Lebanese multi-confessional system.

⁴⁴ Naṣr Allāh's press conference was broadcasted live on *Al-Manār* TV, 30 November 2009 at 1:30 GMT.

⁴⁵ Naṣr Allāh's 2001 call for the abolition of political sectarianism in the mentality, before abolishing it in the texts (10 July 2001 Speech; *al-Safīr* 11 July 2001) bears a striking resemblance to the Maronite bishops' declaration that cautioned that deleting political sectarianism from legal texts before wiping it out from Lebanese people's mentality—through an efficient education of coexistence and mutual respect—is hazardous (*Daily Star*, 5 February 2004). See Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology*, 160.

election programs, and the Speaker of the parliament recent call,⁴⁶ Hizbullah's 2009 Manifesto, called for the establishment of the 'National Body for the Abolishment of Political Sectarianism' since sectarianism is perceived as a threat to consensual democracy and national coexistence.⁴⁷ Although Naṣr Allāh deemed the sectarian system as a tribal system, he clarified:

'Let us be realistic. The abolition of political sectarianism is one of the most difficult issues and cannot be accomplished overnight...no body can dictate how to abolish it in a sentence or two. Rather, if after years of debate, ranging from five to thirty years, we find out that political sectarianism cannot be abolished, then let us be bold enough to say that what we agreed upon in the Tā'if cannot be realized.'

Naṣr Allāh reiterated that in order to come to such a conclusion the Lebanese need to found the 'National Body' in order to initiate the debate in a constructive manner.⁴⁸ Basing itself on its demographic strength, Hizbullah called for reducing the voting age from 21 to 18 and changing the electoral system to proportional representation, which the Party believed would give the 18 ethno-confessional communities more equitable representation.⁴⁹

As a political remuneration for its acclaimed 'divine victory' in the July 2006 war with Israel,⁵⁰ Hizbullah asked for the formation of a

⁴⁶ Few days before Hizbullah revealed its Manifesto, Nabīh Berrī launched his suggestion.

⁴⁷ Idem., Chapter II: 'Lebanon', Section 3: 'The State and the Political System', *Al-Intiqād* (4 December 2009), 4–5.

⁴⁸ Idem. Naṣr Allāh's press conference, 30 November 2009, was broadcast live on *Al-Manār* TV, 30 November 2009 at 1:30 GMT.

⁴⁹ *Al-Safīr* and *al-Nahār* (15 June 2005); Shaykh Ja'far Ḥasan °Atrīsī, *Hizbullah: Al-Khiyār Al-aṣ'ab wa-ḍamānat al-waṭan al-kubrā* [*Hizbullah: The Difficult Choice and Lebanon's Greatest Guarantee*] (Beirut: Dār al-maḥajja al-bayḍā', 2005), 435–39; *Hizbullah: Al-Muqāwama wa-l-tahrīr* [*Hizbullah: Resistance and Liberation*] (Beirut, Editio International, 2006), xi, 200–206. (A thirteen volume encyclopedia on the Party).

⁵⁰ The thirty-four-day war, from July 12 to August 14 2006, between Israel and Hizbullah led to the death of around 1,200 Lebanese, one-third of whom were children under the age of twelve; the wounded and handicapped are estimated at 4,000; more than one million were displaced, around \$15 billion in material damage and loss of revenues was caused. According to Israeli media sources, more than two-thirds (118) of the 159 Israeli dead were soldiers. *Daily Star* and *AFP*. See http://www.dailystar.com.lb/July_War06.asp [accessed 5

national unity Cabinet, where the Party and its Christian allies, the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), wield the one-third veto power, thus attempting to dominate the national political arena, after wielding power over the Legislature and the Presidency. The tug of war between the Hizbullah-led opposition (called the ‘March 8 Group’), on the one hand, and the Lebanese Cabinet and its supporters (‘March 14 Trend’), on the other, led to a bitter polarization, which plunged Lebanon into 537 days of stalemate and political deadlock, from 1 December 2006 to 21 May 2008. The political agreement of 21 May—known as the ‘Doha Accord’ between ‘March 14’ and ‘March 8’, brokered by the Arab League—granted Hizbullah veto power in the next national unity, thirty-member Cabinet⁵¹ by a margin of eleven ministers, while ‘March 14’ acquired sixteen ministers and the President three. Hizbullah ended its sit-in in Downtown Beirut and dismantled its tent city. After six months of vacuum in the seat of the presidency, something unprecedented in Lebanese history, the consensus president Army Commander, Michael Sulaymān was elected on 25 May by 118 votes out of 127 members of parliament. On the next day, Hizbullah celebrated the eighth anniversary of the nearly complete Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon through a fiery speech delivered by Naṣr Allāh, who stressed that Hizbullah abides by the Tāʾif Agreement and will honor the Doha Accord to the letter. That is to say, that it would participate in the political system *as it is*.⁵² Naṣr Allāh’s stance remained the same after the fiasco of March 8 to become the majority in the June 2009 legislative elections.⁵³ One day after the elections, the Party’s leader conceded defeat, called for a burying of the hatchet, congratulated and extended a hand to the victorious March 14 ruling coalition to form a national unity government, and stressed that bygones are bygones. This culminated in the formation of a national unity cabinet on 9 November 2009, based on the previously agreed power-sharing formula: fifteen seats for March 14; five for the centralist

September 2006].

⁵¹ Formed on 11 July 2008. According to the deal of power-sharing, Hizbullah was supposed to obtain three ministerial seats, but it waived two to its allies the FPM, thus making a considerable concession.

⁵² The National Pact of 1943 remained intact after Lebanon’s 1990 Constitution and the 2008 Doha Accord.

⁵³ By the concession of international observers and election watchdogs, the June 7, 2009 elections were the most successful elections after the end of the Civil War in 1990, unprecedentedly held on one day without any bloodshed or serious feuds.

coalition of the president; and ten for March 8. Thus, contrary to its military power and demographic strength, in an endeavor to uphold consensual democracy, it contented itself with two ministers.

Conclusions

By heavy reliance on a strict application of Khūmaynī's *wilāyat al-faqīh* in the 1980s, 'Hizbullah – The Islamic Revolution in Lebanon' emerged as a strong internal organization with limited following. Ṣubḥī al-Ṭufayyīlī's firm, uncompromising political discourse and his repeated references to the establishment of an Islamic state, which is unprecedented in Lebanese political discourse, backfired domestically alienating the Party from other political and social movements, and from the Lebanese public sphere to a great extent. Thus, Hizbullah's policies were counterproductive leading to the failure of integration in Lebanese political life, especially after the Party's initial vehement criticisms to the Tā'if Agreement.

Since the end of the Civil War in 1990, Hizbullah has been confronting major developments in Lebanon: prominently, the emergence of a pluralistic public sphere and increasing openness toward other communities, political parties, and interest groups in the Lebanese myriad. By a new interpretation of *wilāyat al-faqīh*, Hizbullah has altered its discourse, priorities, and overall political outlook. The mixed confessional space in Lebanon led Hizbullah to move from marginalization to *infītāh*, by which the Party became a major player in the Lebanese public sphere participating in the parliamentary and municipal elections, and even obtaining veto power in Prime Minister's Sanyūra Cabinet of 2008–9. In short, since the early 1990s, Hizbullah started promoting its Islamic identity and agenda by following a pragmatic political program, mainly to allay the fears of Christians and other Muslims who were opposed to the Islamic state. In the meantime, Hizbullah remained faithful to its Shī'ite constituency by employing a bottom-up Islamization process by working within the Lebanese state's political and administrative structures, while, at the same time establishing Islamic institutions within civic society.

And so, in the third stage, Hizbullah faced the problem of reconciling its political ideology with political reality. Thus, the Party shifted from a *jihādī* outlook to a more flexible Sharī'a perspective. Hizbullah portrayed a distinguished expediency in its political program in an attempt to reconcile, as much as possible, among its principles, aims, and political ideology, on the one hand, and the circumstances and its objective capabilities, on the other hand, by heavy reliance on the

jurisprudential concepts of necessity, vices, and interests as a kind of Islamic *prima facie* duty. This is how Hizbullah's pragmatism was conducive in forging a marriage of convenience between political ideology and political reality, to the extent of pursuing a policy of *infitāh* as sanctioned by its political program.

Thus, the logic of operating within the bounds of the Lebanese state prevailed over the logic of the revolution. The Party justifies and legitimizes its political program by resorting to Quranic and jurisprudential bases. Significantly, the Shī'ite politico-religious heritage conferred upon Hizbullah all the authenticity it needed in order to derive from it a political program based on flexibility and pragmatism. Thus, relying on the progressive nature of Shī'ite jurisprudence, Hizbullah remolded, constructed, and interpreted its authority in such a way to render legitimacy to its participation in a pluralist polity based upon a quota system and patronage. And so, by heavy reliance on Shī'ite jurisprudence, especially the concept of *maṣlaḥa*, Hizbullah was able to change as circumstances themselves changed, through its pragmatic interpretation and metamorphosis of *wilāyat al-faqīh*, which proved to be flexible, capable of functioning in a multi-confessional, multi-religious society such as Lebanon, and not only in, more or less, monolithic Iran where the overwhelming majority of the population are Twelver Shī'ites.