American Foreign Policy Council

LEBANON

QUICK FACTS

Population: 4,125,247

Area: 10,400 sq km

Ethnic Groups: Arab 95%, Armenian 4%, other 1%

Religions: Muslim 59.7% (Shi'a, Sunni, Druze, Isma'ilite, Alawite or Nusayri), Christian 39% (Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Melkite Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Chaldean, Assyrian, Copt, Protestant), other 1.3%

GDP (official exchange rate): $33.04 billion

Map and Quick Facts courtesy of the CIA World Factbook (Last Updated July 2010)

Lebanon as an independent state was created in 1943 on the basis of a pact between Muslims and Christians, whereby Beirut would serve as a crossroads between East and West. This pact was institutionalized into a democratic, confessional system that distributed power along religious lines. This political system encouraged the creation of diverse social and political groups, reinforcing democracy in the short term but simultaneously laying the groundwork for the proliferation of Islamist groups inimical to the ruling order. These forces presented Islam as the solution to the ills of Lebanese –and indeed, larger Arab – society, especially in the wake of the

Arab defeat in the 1967 War with Israel. Iran's 1979 Revolution and Israel's subsequent invasion of Lebanon in 1982 changed the socio-political dynamics in Beirut, leading Iran and Syria to support the creation of Hezbollah, a Shi'ite jihadi organization dedicated to fighting Israel and its allies in Lebanon. Hezbollah, in turn, erected an expansive social, political and military infrastructure in Lebanon, ensconcing itself as a key arbiter of power. Sunni Islamist forces, by contrast, mobilized later—in reaction to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the murder of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005. Hezbollah's seizure of West Beirut in May 2008 intensified sectarian tensions and deepened the activity of Islamist forces. Since then, the political discourse of the country has been polarized further, while Hezbollah has continued its drive to control the state and "Islamize" Lebanon's society and collective identity.

ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

Though the seeds of political Islam were sown in Lebanon in the aftermath of the 1948 War, the Arab defeat in the 1967 War and the failure of nationalist regimes to address the socio-political ills of Arab society provided the environment for the growth of Islamist movements, which asserted that "Islam" is the solution. Lebanon's confessional system and quasi-democracy allowed the Islamists to freely operate and to try to affect society and politics by expanding their popular base of support. No less significant, the same confessional system that favored one community over another provided the Islamists the political tool to rail against the system's intrinsic socio-political and administrative inequalities. The call to abolish political sectarianism, which favored the Christian community, became a rallying cry for Islamists and pan-Arabists alike. But it was the fight against the "Zionist entity" (the Islamists' designation of Israel) that served as a means for the Islamist movements, especially the Shi'a Islamist movement, to redress their socio-political marginalization and to mobilize and polarize Lebanon's communities.

Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyah and the Jabhat al-Amal al-Islami (Islamic Action Front)

The Islamic Association (*al-Jama'a al-Islamiyah*), an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood and Lebanon's first Sunni

Islamist movement, had its origins in the Association of the Worshippers of the Compassionate (*Jama'at Ubad al-Rahman*) founded by Muhammad Umar al-Da'uq in the 1950s.

Distressed by the Arab defeat in Palestine in 1948, al-Da'uq fled to Beirut, where he established the Association, which reflected his belief that the loss of Palestine was linked to the distance of Muslims from their religion. He strove to bring Muslims back to "Islam as a faith, dogma [and] way of life" and to inculcate a "spirit of *Jihad* and sacrifice."[1] He based his proselytizing (*da'wa*) on the educational, cultural, ethical, and spiritual tenets of Islam. By the early 1950s, his *da'wa* activity reached many Sunni-majority cities and towns, including Tripoli (the capital of North Lebanon), where a center for *Jama'at Ubad al-Raham* was opened. It was in Tripoli that the future leaders of today's Islamic Association, including its co-founder, Fathi Yakan, joined the center.

Around the same time, Mustafa al-Siba'i, the superintendent of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, moved to Beirut following the outlawing of his group and the arrest of many of its members by the Syrian regime.[2] Invited by Muslim associations to Tripoli, al-Siba'i organized a series of well-received lectures and forums there. Yakan and his colleagues were moved by al-Sibai's ideology, as well as his dedication to "liberating the Islamic nation from foreign rule" and "establishing a free Islamic state."[3] No sooner did they become familiar with the works of the Brotherhood ideologues Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb than they decided to move beyond mere cultural and educational activism. The resulting Islamist organization, *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyah*, was officially licensed by Lebanon's Interior Ministry on June 18, 1964.[4]

Following the Arab defeat in 1967, *al-Jama'a* and other Islamist movements gained momentum. During Lebanon's initial civil war years (1975-1976), the Islamic Association founded a militia, *al-Mujahiddin*, which fought alongside the pan-Arab, leftist National Movement against the Maronite Christians. Following the entry of Syrian troops into Lebanon in the summer of 1976, the Islamic Association dismantled its militia. But in the 1980s, *Al-Jama'a* founded a new armed corps, *Quwat Fajr* (the Fajr Brigades), to resist the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Throughout the mid- to late-1980s, it supported Hezbollah's *jihad* against Israeli occupa-

tion of southern Lebanon.[5]

Following the end of the civil war in 1990, *al-Jama'a* supported Lebanon's resulting political system and participated in municipal and parliamentary elections. It has pursued an opportunistic electoral policy of cooperating with leaders and parties that enhance its chances of winning. Yet *al-Jama'a* has had uneasy relations with other Islamist parties and political actors. Specifically, *al-Jama'a* tried to strike a balance between supporting Hezbollah (the country's radical Shi'ite militia) and maintaining some sort of a political alliance with the Sunni community leadership of the al-Hariri family, which has been the leader of the U.S.-backed March 14th Forces.

The internal conflict within the Islamic Association came to a head in 2006, when the co-founder of the organization, Fathi Yakan, resigned over his objections to *al-Jama'a's* alliance with al-Hariri's *Mustaqbal* Party and the alliance's antagonistic stand toward Hezbollah. Yakan also fervently opposed *al-Mustaqbal's* close relationship with Washington, as he unequivocally supported the "resistance camp" of Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas.[6] Subsequently, Yakan recruited a number of Islamist groups and personalities and founded the *Jabhat al-Amal al-Islami* (The Islamic Action Front) in August 2006.[7] In its founding statement, the Islamic Action Front described its mission as "an affirmation of Islamic and national unity, protecting the Resistance and defending the unity of Lebanon...confronting sectarian and ethnic strife...and rejecting Western and American threats to Arab and Muslim countries."[8]

Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation)

Hizb ut-Tahrir was founded in Jordan by Sheikh Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, a Palestinian who studied at al-Azhar University, in the early 1950s. Following the 1948 War, he moved to Beirut, then to Jerusalem whence he moved to Jordan to become an instructor at the Islamic College in Amman. *Hizb al-Tahrir* in Lebanon was established in October of 1959.[9] The group describes itself as "a political party with Islam as its ideology."[10] It attributes the Islamic world's decline to irreligiouslity and seeks to resurrect Islam's golden age by reviving the Islamic way of life by establishing an Islamic State that implements Islam and carries its *da'wa* (call to Islam) to

the world.[11] Strategically, it plans to institute Islamic law in one or more countries as a steppingstone to creating the greater Islamic state, the Caliphate, over all Islamic lands.[12]

However, the party did not fare well in Lebanon, or in any other Arab country. The organization consequently went underground, re-emerging in Lebanon only after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, when it organized anti-American demonstrations in Tripoli.[13] In 2005, Lebanese authorities indicted members of the group *in absentia* for their role in planning terror attacks in Iraq.[14] Though the party is still publicly committed to non-violence, and has vowed not to participate in Lebanese elections, it was officially banned for a time from operating in Lebanon. It remained active on an unofficial level, however; for example, in its organization of a demonstration in Beirut in September 2005 to commemorate the 81st anniversary of the Caliphate's abolition. In 2006, Ahmad Fatfat, the interior minister of the Hariri-backed Siniora government, permitted the party to renew its activity as a licensed political party. The party, in turn, has used its newfound legitimacy to stress that Lebanon's problems could only be addressed by turning Lebanon into an Islamic nation. And while it still maintains that such a transformation should come by peaceful means, the organization has supported violence elsewhere in the region; At the party's annual conference in 2009, its leader, Sheikh Adnan Mizyan, proclaimed that, "In light of the fact that many countries of Muslims are today under occupation, including Palestine, Iraq, Cyprus, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Afghanistan, and Kashmir, the Islamic Ummah must take Jihad measures in order to free them."[15] Official membership in the party is difficult to approximate; however, it is not implausible to estimate the number of its members and supporters to be in the several hundred on the basis of the number of attendees at the party's annual conferences and the number of protesters participating in its demonstrations.

Salafists

The return to Lebanon of the Afghan *mujahideen* in the late 1970s and early 1980s, following the end of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, contributed to the emergence of Salafist *jihadi* movements in under-developed and poor Sunni areas there.[16]

Salafi *jihadis* constitute a minority among the Salafists. Their activities can be traced to Lebanese Afghan veteran Bassam Kanj, also known as Abou Aisha. Kanj reportedly fought alongside bin Ladin in Afghanistan in the 1980s. During his stay in Peshawar, Pakistan, in 1988, he forged close relationships with a number of *mujahideen* who would later form the nucleus of the group he founded in 1996 in Northern Lebanon, *al-Takfir wal-Hijra.* This group also became known as the Dinniyeh Group, after the town where they had been active. In December 1999, the Dinniyeh group clashed with the Lebanese army. Kanj was killed and more than two dozen other members of the group were either killed or captured. Subsequently, in July 2000, the Mount Lebanon Criminal Court indicted 120 men for their alleged connection with the Dinniyeh group and the aforementioned clashes.[17]

Another *jihadist* group, *Isbat al-Ansar* (Band of Partisans), emerged in the Palestinian refugee camp of Ain al-Hilweh near the southern city of Sidon. The group was founded by Hisham Shridi, a former Palestinian leader of *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyah* who had gained notoriety fighting Israeli forces in South Lebanon. In December 1991, Shridi was assassinated by the PLO's Fatah movement in an attempt to re-impose its authority in the largest Palestinian refugee camp. Shridi was succeeded by his closest aide, Muhammad Abd al-Karim al-Saadi, also known as Abu Muhjin. During the 1990s, Abu Muhjin's group, in an attempt to assert its radical ideology, carried out a number of attacks on Christian religious targets and liquor stores. In 1995, his group assassinated Shaykh Nizar al-Halabi, the leader of *al-Ahbash* (see below). Lebanese authorities executed three members of the group for their participation in the plot, and issued a death sentence *in absentia* against Abu Muhjin. Another participant, Yasir Izzat Saud, was sentenced to death, but his sentence was later commuted.[18]

Since then, Abu Muhjin has disappeared from public view and *de facto* leadership of the organization passed to his brother, known as Abu Tarik. In June 1999, the group assassinated three Lebanese judges and the chief prosecutor for southern Lebanon at the Justice Palace in Sidon in an act of revenge for the execution of three of their colleagues. The group has taken pride in participating in the *jihad* against U.S. troops in Iraq.[19] It remains active mainly

in the Ain al-Hilweh camp, and is estimated to command the loyalty of between 100 and 300 fighters.[20]

But the deadliest manifestation of Salafi *jihadism* in Lebanon is embodied by *Fatah al-Islam*. The organization emerged in November 2006, when it split from *Fatah al-Intifada* (Fatah Uprising), a Syrian-backed Palestinian group based in Lebanon. Its main founder was Shaker al-Absi, a Jordanian-Palestinian best known for organizing the 2002 assassination of U.S. diplomat Lawrence Foley in Amman. Gradually, Absi's motley group seized control of the Palestinian Nahr al-Bared refugee camp near Tripoli. The Lebanese government linked it to deadly bus bombings in Ain Alaq, Lebanon, on February 13, 2007, which killed three people. On May 20, 2007, a battle between *Fatah al-Islam* and Lebanese troops erupted in Nahr al-Bared following a police search for suspects in a bank robbery. The fighting lasted until September 2, 2007 and claimed the lives of over 160 Lebanese soldiers. The Lebanese government initially claimed that the Salafi *jihadist* organization was the creation of Syrian intelligence. Damascus, however, denied any relationship with *Fatah al-Islam*. Later on, Lebanese authorities discovered that the group had links to al-Qaeda.[21]

Al-Ahbash

The Association of Islamic Philanthropic Projects (*Jam'iyyat al-Mashari' al-Khairiyya al-Islamiyya*) is a comparatively moderate Islamist force supported by Syria as a counterweight to radical Islamist forces in Lebanon. It is a Sufi movement that devoutly follows the teachings of its founder Sheikh Abdallah Ibn Muhammad Ibn Yusuf al-Hirari al-Shi'bi al-Abdari, also known as Abdallah al-Habashi. Al-Habashi, born in 1920 in al-Hirara, Ethiopia, migrated to Beirut in the 1950s and became a lecturer at al-Azhar University's Lebanese branch. His school of thought mixes elements of Sunni and Shi'a theological doctrines with Sufi spiritualism. The group's website and journal, *Manar al-Huda*, emphasize Islam's pluralistic nature; oppose the use of violence against the ruling authorities; accept the legitimacy of the Imam Ali (the Shi'a doctrine of legitimacy) and of his sons Hassan and Hussein; uphold the teachings of Hussein's son, Zayn al-Abidin; and defend many Sufi beliefs and practices condemned by Islamists as heresies.[22]

Tensions between *al-Ahbash* and Salafi *jihadis* in Lebanon peaked in 1995, when members of the radical group *Isbat al-Ansar* assassinated *al-Ahbash's* leader, Sheikh Nizar Halabi. In April 2001, *al-Ahbash* supporters took the streets in Beirut chanting pro-Syrian slogans while brandishing clubs and knives.[23] Moreover, following the murder of Hariri in 2005 and the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon thereafter, *al-Ahbash* took to the streets in Beirut, along with other pro-Syrian parties and groups, in a show of solidarity with Syria. This created friction between the government and *al-Ahbash* supporters—tension which played out in sporadic street fighting in West Beirut.

Notably, however, *al-Ahbash's* pro-Syrian stance has not translated into support for Hezbollah, especially following Hezbollah's takeover of West Beirut in 2008. Communal and personal tensions between Hezbollah and *al-Ahbash* erupted in deadly skirmishes in Burj Abi Haydar, the stronghold of *al-Ahbash* in West Beirut, in August 2010.[24] Syria did not take sides in the conflict, preferring to try and tamp down tensions.

Hezbollah

The ideological foundations of what would come to be known as Hezbollah were laid in the 1960s and 1970s in Lebanon by three religious scholars: the Ayatollahs Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah and Muhammad Mahdi Shamseddine and Imam Musa al-Sadr. The party embraced the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's revolutionary doctrine of *Velayat e-Faqih* (Guardianship of the Jurisconsult), which would come to dominate in Iran in 1979. Neglected by the Lebanese government and underrepresented in the country's confessional political system, these religious scholars sought to empower and unify Lebanon's Shi'a community.

Their efforts were greatly aided by Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon. The Shi'a community, which had initially welcomed the Israeli troops, quickly mobilized against the "occupation" forces. The reason had to do with the connection made by many Shi'ites between Israel's invasion and Iran's successful model of Islamic revolution, which convinced them that armed struggle could be a vehicle for achieving political dominance.[25]

The seeds for a fundamentalist movement were thus sown

in Lebanon. The *jihadi* program proved to be popular, offering an outlet for some Shi'ites unhappy with what they considered the progressive taming of their community's main political movement, *Amal*. A breakaway faction of *Amal* led by Hussein Mussawi was the first to join the nascent Islamist movement. Before long, other Shi'ite fundamentalists from the Beka'a Valley, the south of Lebanon and the Beirut suburb of Dahiyeh followed. The result was the coalescence of the Party of God, or Hezbollah.

Iran's religious establishment immediately perceived the movement as a vehicle by which to expand its revolutionary principles to the Lebanese Shi'a community and become a player in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Tehran deployed its crack Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC, or *Pasdaran*) to train and indoctrinate Hezbollah's cadres. Tehran, however, could not do this on its own. Given Syria's border with Lebanon and the latter's considerable troop presence there (a product of the Lebanese civil war), Iran also needed the blessing of Damascus. This was not difficult to obtain, however. Adamant about preventing Israel and its Lebanese allies from controlling Lebanon, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad blessed the Iranian infiltration so long it did not affect Syrian attempts at controlling Lebanon.

Throughout the 1980s, militants associated with Hezbollah launched a campaign of terror targeting both the Multinational Forces sent in 1982 to oversee the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut and Westerners residing in the capital. Suicide bombers attacked the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Marines barracks in April and October of 1983, respectively. They took dozens of Americans and Europeans hostage and hijacked TWA flight 847 in 1985. Though the Iranian government denied all involvement, enough circumstantial evidence pointed to involvement by high-ranking members of the regime in Tehran.[26]

Over time, Assad would come to see Hezbollah not only as a "resistance movement" but also as a potential Lebanese political force. The status quo was altered in 1989 with the death of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and the ensuing shift in political focus that took place in Tehran. At the same time, Syria, assisted by Saudi and Algerian mediation, brokered the Taif Accord, ending Lebanon's civil war. Signed by a majority of Lebanese deputies

on October 22, 1989, the accord amended the Lebanese constitution, conferring roughly equal powers on the country's three main communities, the Maronites, Sunnis, and Shi'a. The accord also recognized Syria's "special relationship" with Lebanon, a trusteeship subsequently cemented by the May 20, 1991 *Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation, and Coordination* and the September 1, 1991 *Lebanon-Syria Defense and Security Agreement*.[27] As a result, Hezbollah entered Lebanon's political realm as a political party, while at the same time it was allowed by Damascus, unlike any other party, to keep its weapons and continue its *jihadi* activities against Israel in South Lebanon. Supported by Iran and Syria, Hezbollah emerged as a strong, multi-pronged force, whose image as a "resistance" movement was enhanced following the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon in 2000.

The Hezbollah-Iranian-Syrian relationship grew stronger after the United States launched military operations against Iraq in March 2003, thereby shattering the regional *status quo*. Both Iran and Syria sought to prevent the United States from creating a new regional order that could threaten their rejectionist regimes. Thus, they supported Hezbollah not only as a deterrent force against the U.S. and Israel, but also as a military and political force against the pro-Western March 14 movement that was created following the murder of Hariri.[28]

It is in this context that the summer 2006 war erupted between Hezbollah and Israel. The hostilities ended on the basis of a seven-point plan and UNSCR 1701, which increased the number of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) troops in southern Lebanon and called for the dismantling and disarming of all militias. Despite the destruction wrought upon Lebanese infrastructure and Hezbollah's cadres, the group's secretary general, Hassan Nasrallah, declared a "divine" victory and called for a national unity government and a new electoral law, asserting that the resistance had dealt a blow to American Middle East strategy.[29]

Whatever semblance of national unity Lebanon exhibited during the 2006 Lebanon War dissipated quickly. Recriminations and counter-recriminations have become a staple of Lebanese politics. A struggle for control of the state reemerged, with the March 14 Forces attempting to implement UN Security Council resolu-

tions and support the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, created by the UN Security Council to investigate and prosecute the culprits of Hariri's assassination. Hezbollah, meanwhile, has sought veto power over government decisions under the pretext of national unity, with an eye toward changing the political structure in Lebanon so as to make it commensurate with Shi'a numbers.

ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

While the roots of Islamism in Lebanon can be traced to the late 1940s, the phenomenon first gained traction politically in the late 1960s and 1970s, in response to domestic and regional failures. Key among them were the humiliating defeat of the Arab states in the 1967 War and the inability of the region's autocratic regimes to sustain economic growth for a growing Arab population. Islamists professed that Islam is the solution.

While Lebanon's confessional political system allowed the Islamists considerable room to operate, it simultaneously circumscribed their political development. Lebanon's Sunni leadership, acting in concert with the country's main religious establishment (*Dar al-afta*'), managed to maintain its primacy at the expense of Islamist forces. Hezbollah, the Shi'ite militia, succeeded over time in reversing this trend, thanks in no small part to the support of Iran and Syria, especially since the 1990s when the movement became a political party. In fact, Hezbollah used its *Jihad* against Israel to enhance its political image as a patriotic party to put on the defensive those who questioned its actions, be they Christians or Muslims.

Both Shi'a and Sunni Islamists abhorred Maronite political power. Even when Nasserite pan-Arab nationalists were targeting Islamists in the 1950s, the Islamists sided with the pan-Arabists and leftists during Lebanon's civil strife in 1958.[30] Moreover, when the civil war erupted in 1975, Sunni Islamists, led by the Islamic Association, founded a militia to fight alongside the pan-Arabists and leftists against the Maronites. Fathi Yakan, the secretary general of the Islamic Association in the 1970s and 1980s, recommended that Lebanon merge with Syria as a solution to its confessional prob-

lems.[31]

Similarly, Hezbollah, until it became a political party and launched its *Infitah* (opening up) policy, acted not only to defeat the Maronite regime but also to turn Lebanon's multi-confessional society into an Islamic state.[32] Despite ideological differences between Sunni Islamism and Shi'a Islamism as expressed by Ayatollah Khomeini, Sunni Islamist movements, particularly the Islamic Unity Movement, accepted Iranian leadership and their policies. More so, the Islamic Unity Movement during its short rule over Tripoli imposed *sharia* law there and enforced strict Islamic behavior in the city regardless of sect. Christian women had to wear the veil and liquor stores, clubs, and churches were vandalized or bombed.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq and especially the murder of Hariri served to mobilize Sunni Islamists, particularly the Salafists, who were theretofore largely apolitical, weak or restricted in their movements by Lebanese and Syrian authorities. Moreover, sectarian tensions heightened following the summer 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel and the seizure of Beirut in May 2008 by Hezbollah. As a result, the heightened political discourse sharpened sectarian tension across Lebanon's communities and society. Whereas some Sunni movements, such as the Islamic Action Front, supported Hezbollah, Salafists denounced the Shi'a community as heretical and deplored Hezbollah as the party of Satan. Even sectarian tension between two pro-Syrian groups, *al-Ahbash* and Hezbollah, degenerated into deadly street fighting in West Beirut.

Nevertheless, Hezbollah now is trying to make "resistance" against Israel the basis of Lebanese identity.[33] To a large extent, the Islamic Association has shared Hezbollah's vision of a society of resistance, despite some reservations about the Shi'a Islamist party. The Islamic Association's Political Manifesto underscores that "confronting this [Zionist] project requires great responsibilities on the part of the Islamic Association. The Ummah [community of believers] should be mobilized and made aware of the Zionist danger, which threatens its existence...and that a resistance society should be built in theory and practice."[34]

ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

Until the end of Lebanon's civil war in 1990, Islamist movements tended to shy away from national politics, focusing instead on their *da'wa* (proselytization) and the "Islamization" of Lebanese society. Both the Islamic Association and Hezbollah were forced to justify their participation in national politics on ideological grounds, the former going so far as to carry out a study of Islamic law which justified participation on the grounds "that to participate in parliamentary sessions does not mean approving any legislative position contradicting Islamic law… to participate in parliament sessions is a gateway to *Da'wa*… and to participate in parliament activities is to provide opportunities to realize peoples' interest and block vices, as well as achieve a balanced economic development."[35] Hezbollah's decision to enter Lebanese politics, by contrast, was sanctioned by none other than Iran's supreme leader, the Ayatollah Khamenei (although ideological questions over the group's participation were thrashed out by the party's Lebanese leadership).[36]

Today, although they ostensibly support pluralism in Lebanon, both the Islamic Association and Hezbollah remain steadfast in calling for the abolishment of the state's confessional system.[37] Christians and other minorities, however, fervently oppose such changes, fearing that they would be politically marginalized as a result. While the Islamic Association lacks the political capital to bring about such a fundamental change in the state's system, Hezbollah does not; rather, it has been using a dual policy of *Infitah* (opening up) and political coercion backed by military power to progressively control the Lebanese state. Since its participation in the first parliamentary elections in the 1990s, Hezbollah's *infitah* policy has sought to engage all communities in Lebanon, especially Christians. In theory, the party has shed its radical objective to turn Lebanon into an Islamic state, supporting pluralism. Yet, it has not relinquished its desire that Lebanon's non-Muslims convert to Islam. The Shi'a Islamist party uses political coercion whenever it faces pressure from the majority. In addition to seizing Beirut in May 2008 to force the government to repeal decisions considered hazardous to its security, Hezbollah has introduced the novel concept of consensual democracy, whereby a majority cannot make any decision or pass legisla-

tion without the consent of the minority. In fact, Hezbollah, in the name of national unity and co-existence, has succeeded in making this governing mode the dominant one in Lebanese politics.[38]

At the same time, however, Hezbollah has pursued a divisive political agenda that has deepened the sectarian and political rifts in Lebanese politics. The militia recently brought down the pro-Western Hariri government, following abortive attempts to force the government to forsake the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL). At the same time, fearing the indictment of its members for the murder of prime minister Rafiq Hariri, Hezbollah has raised the specter of sectarian strife should charges materialize. These moves have polarized an already-charged political climate riven by sectarian grievances.

The Lebanese state has maintained its policy of distinguishing between what it considers "resistance" movements, such as Hezbollah, and Islamist terrorist organizations, especially Sunni Salafist groups with links to al-Qaeda. In fact, since the Dinniyeh clashes in December 1999, and in particular in the aftermath of the September 11th terror attacks, Lebanese authorities have pursued and arrested many Sunni extremists. In October 2002, Interior Minister Elias Murr publicly stated that his government had arrested hundreds of suspected militants,[39] many of whom continue to be held on tenuous grounds. Following the battle of Nahr al-Bared, this campaign against Sunni extremism has evolved into a concerted counterterrorism effort, one supported and assisted by the United States. Specifically, Washington's aid to Beirut significantly increased since 2007 in the form of U.S. security assistance to the Lebanese armed forces and Internal Security Force.[40] Significantly, in October 2007, the U.S. and Lebanese governments signed a Letter of Agreement on Law Enforcement to strengthen "the capacity of the Internal Security Force to enforce the rule of law in Lebanon, cement sovereign Lebanese government control over its territory and protect the Lebanese people by training police."[41]

In addition to security cooperation with the United States, Lebanese authorities have tried to combat Islamic extremism domestically by supporting a dialogue with religious scholars and activists

in Northern Lebanon, and endorsing a program by Dar al-Ifta', a scholarly religious institution, for supervising Islamic schools, colleges and institutes. In much the same spirit, parliamentary majority leader Saad Hariri launched a major developmental program in 2008 focusing on underdeveloped areas in northern Lebanon, where Islamic extremism has been spreading.

However, notwithstanding these efforts, Lebanese authorities have remained indecisive about entering Palestinian refugee camps, some of which have become safe havens for criminals and militants. Rather, they have been cooperating with the PLO in the hopes that the latter will re-impose its authority in the camps. Significantly, Lebanese-American cooperation has come under intense criticism by Hezbollah deputies and other pro-Hezbollah parties, who have urged the cessation of cooperation with the United States.[42] This has further blurred the lines between "terrorism" and "resistance" in the eyes of the official bureaucracy, and complicated official counterterrorism efforts.

ENDNOTES

[1] "al-Harakat al-Islamiyah fi Lubnan (Islamic Movements in Lebanon)," and "al-Jama'a al-Islamiyah (Islamic Association), in *al-Harakat al-Islamiyah fi Lubnan* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Arabi lil-Ma'lumat, 2007), 110.

[2] Robert G. Rabil, "The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood," in Barry Rubin, ed., *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Organization and Policies of a Global Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[3] For details on the Muslim Brotherhood's doctrine and objectives see "Introducing the Muslim Brotherhood, Part One," Information Center of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, January 29, 2007, http://www.ikhwansyria.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=19&Itemid=114, and "Introducing the Muslim Brotherhood, Part Two," Information Center of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, February 7, 2007, http://www.ikhwansyria.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=218&Itemid=114.

[4] See *al-Harakat al-Islamiyah fi Lubnan*, 111; See also Ibrahim Bayram, "al-Jama'a al-Islamiyah min Ubad al-Rahman ila al-Intikhabat al-Niabiyah," (The Islamic Association from Ubad al-Rahman to Parliamentary Elections), *an-Nahar* (Beirut), April 1, 1997. At the time, Kamal Jumblat was the Minister of Interior. Based on the official license, the founders were Fathi Yakan, Sheikh Faisal Mawlawi, Zuhair al-Abidi, and Ibrahim al-Misri.

[5] Hassan Fadlallah, *Harb al-Iradat: Sira' al-Muqawamah wa al-Ihtilal al-Israeli fi Lubnan* 3rd edition (The Battle of Wills: The Struggle of the Resistance and the Israeli Occupation in Lebanon) (Beirut: Dar al-Hadi, 2009).

[6] For ideological and political details on Fathi Yakan, see Robert G. Rabil, *Religion, National Identity, and Confessional Politics in Lebanon: The Challenge of Islamism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[7] For details on the founding of the Islamic Action Front, including a list of its members, see "Tashkil Jabhat al-Amal al-Islami," (Forming of the Islamic Action Front), *al-Mustaqbal* (Beirut), August 3, 2006.

[8] Ibid.

[9] "Hizb al-Tahrir: Nakhbawi wa Sirri wa Yatmah li-Iqamat al-Khilafah," (Hizb al-Tahrir: Selective and Secret and Aspires to Create the Caliphate) *al-Diyar* (Beirut), December 3, 2001.

[10] "Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir," 1953, http://english.hizbuttahrir.org/.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibidem.

[13] "Hizb al-Tahrir: Min al-Sir ila al-'Alan," (Hizb al-Tahrir: From Secrecy to the Open) *as-Safir* (Beirut), July 24, 2004.

[14] "Khamsat Kawader fi Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami Yuhadirun li-Haja-

mat fi al-Iraq bil-Tansiq Ma'a Isbat al-Ansar" (Five Cadres from Hizb al-Tahrir Plan in Coordination with Isbat al-Ansar Attacks in Iraq), *al-Mustaqbal* (Beirut), August 27, 2005.

[15] "Speaker at Hizb al-Tahrir Conference in Lebanon Calls for Jihad in Cyprus, Balkans, Caucasus," *as-Safir* (Beirut), July 20, 2009, http://www.thememriblog.org/blog_personal/en/18360.htm.

[16] Fida' 'Itani, *Al-Jihadiyun fi Lubnan: Min Quwat Fajr ila Fath al-Islam* (The Jihadists in Lebanon: From Fajr Brigades to Fath al-Islam) (Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 2008); see also Bilal Y. Saab and Magnus Ranstorp, "Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30 (2007).

[17] See Amnesty International, *Lebanon: Torture and Unfair Trial of the Dhiniyyah Detainees*, May 6, 2003, http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE18/005/2003/en/8d446494-d72e-11dd-b0cc-1f0860013475/mde180052003en.pdf.

[18] "Halabi's Killer Gets Sentence Commuted," *Daily Star* (Beirut), July 28, 2000.

[19] See Thair Abbas, "Al-Qaeda in Lebanon," *Ash-Sharq al-Awsat* (London), March 19, 2006.

[20] U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2009* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, August 2010), 244.

[21] On nuanced details on Fath al-Islam, see 'Itani, *Al-Jihadiyun fi Lubnan*, 230-297; Gary C. Gambill, "Salafi-Jihadism in Lebanon," *Mideast Monitor* 3, January-March 2008; Saab and Ranstorp, "Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism."

[22] See www.aicp.org; and www.al-ahbash.org; See also Hamzeh and Dekmejian, "A Sufi Response to Political Islamism."

[23] Daniel Nassif, "Al-Ahbash," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 3, no. 4, April 2001.

[24] Wassam Saade, "Harb al-Shaware' Khuruj 'an al-Qanun," (Street Fighting Is Outside the Law), *al-Mustaqbal* (Beirut), August 27, 2010.

[25] For details, see Robert G. Rabil, *Embattled Neighbors: Syria, Israel and Lebanon* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 43-80; See also Rabil, *Religion, National Identity and Confessional Politics in Lebanon*.

[26] For more on this episode, see Augustus Richard Norton, "Walking between Raindrops: Hizballah in Lebanon," *Mediterranean Politics* 3, no. 1 (Summer 1998), and Magnus Ranstorp, *Hizb'allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

[27] For more details, see Rabil, *Embattled Neighbors: Syria, Israel, and Lebanon*, 127-132.

[28] For more details, see Rabil, *Religion, National Identity and Confessional Politics in Lebanon: The Challenge of Islamism*; See also Robert

Rabil, *Syria, the United States and the War on Terror in the Middle East* (Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2006).

[29] Nasrallah's speech was aired on the party's television station, *al-Manar* on September 22, 2006.

[30] For details see Rabil, *Religion, National Identity and Confessional Politics in Lebanon*.

[31] Fathi Yakan, *al-Masa'la al-Lubnaniyah min Manthur Islami* (The Lebanese Question from an Islamic Perspective) (Beirut: Mu'assassat al-Risalah, 1979), 126-128.

[32] See the text of the Open Letter addressed by Hezbollah to the oppressed in Lebanon and the world, February 16, 1985, as reprinted in Joseph Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 223-238.

[33] Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah: al-Manhaj, al-Tajribah, al-Mustaqbal* (Hezbollah: The Curriculum [program], the Experience, the Future) (Beirut: dar al-Hadi, sixth edition, 2009), 275-276.

[34] "The Political Vision of the Islamic Association," June 24, 2010, http://www.al-jamaa.org/play.php?catsmktba=1484.

[35] See the full text of the Islamic Association's study in Fathi Yakan, *Adwa' 'ala al-Tajribah al-Niyabiyah al-Islamiyah fi Lubnan: Al-ida' al-Niyabi bayn al-Mabda' wa al-Tatbiq* (Lights on the Islamic Parliamentary Experience in Lebanon: The Parliamentary Performance Between Principle and Practice) (Beirut: Mu'assassat al-Risalah, 1996), 179-198.

[36] Qassem, *Al-Manhaj, al-Tajribah, al-Mustaqbal*, 338-339.

[37] See the Association's Political Manifesto.

[38] See details in "Political Manifesto of the Party of God," *al-Intiqad* (Beirut), November 30, 2009, http://www.alintiqad.com/essaydetailsf.php?eid=22807&fid=43.

[39] *as-Safir* (Beirut), October 28, 2002.

[40] The total of U.S. regular and supplemental foreign operations and defense appropriations from 2007 to 2011 (as requested) amounted to $860.12 million. Casey L. Addis, *U.S. Security Assistance to Lebanon* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, January 2011), 3.

[41] "Letter of Agreement on Law Enforcement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Lebanon" n.d., http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/130486.pdf.

[42] In June 2010, parliament speaker Nabih Berri sent a letter to then Prime-Minister Saad Hariri and President Michel Suleiman calling the security agreement unconstitutional. Berri and Hezbollah deputies have argued that the security agreement is unconstitutional because it was surreptitiously concluded and signed by General Director of the Internal Security Force Achraf Rifi.