

# **HIZBULLAH'S**

## **Pulse**

**Into the dilemma of AL-Shahid and Jihad Al-Bina Foundations**

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*To Maan & Noha D., the pillars in my life*

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## **Foreword**

This study's basic focus is on the institutions and mobilizational strategies that have enabled Hizbullah to become one of the leading actors on the Lebanese and Arab theaters. One of its main strengths lies in its rigor, based on extensive field research, including personal interviews, and credible statistics. Thus it is an important step forward in exploring the social basis of political Islam.

The study highlights the importance of the social matrix in Hizbullah's overall strategy to recruit volunteers for its fight against Israel, and mobilize and consolidate its influence within the Shiite community. Apart from the relative weight of religion, the social and economic incentives tie the community intimately to Hizbullah and enable the latter to exercise and wield considerable influence within it. The efficient organization of Hizbullah's social and developmental institutions, particularly "The Shahid Foundation", help to explain both its electoral and military success.

As Hizbullah meanwhile plays a considerable role in Lebanon not only in the political but also in the social field this study is important for everybody who is concerned with this country in particular and Islamist movements in general. Committed to the promotion of dialogue the Friedrich -Ebert-Stiftung hopes to contribute with this publication to the understanding of Lebanese society and its cultural diversity.

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## ***Hizbullah***

### **Introduction: Understanding the Phenomenon of Hizbullah**

Fawaz A. Gerges \*

### **The Crisis of Political Authority in the Arab World**

Hizbullah is in crisis and so are the political Islamists in general. Far from getting closer to their goal of establishing an Islamic state, Islamists have been forced to revisit their ideologies and rethink their relations with government and society. Once again, the Arab political order has proved to be more durable and resilient than some observers had predicted. Neither the Islamists nor other secular opposition forces have been able to resist the Arab state, let alone match its coercive powers. The opposite is true. In almost every instance, the state apparatus has prevailed against the opposition be it secular or Islamist.

At one point in the early 1990s many analysts predicted that the Islamist storm would sweep away Arab regimes from power and would replace them with new religious - political entities. From Egypt to Algeria, two of the most pivotal Arab states, the Islamist onslaught threatened to wreak havoc with their secular governments and realign the nature and character of Arab politics. Between 1990 and 1998, both the Egyptian and Algerian governments faced a formidable Islamist insurgency that was not only costly in terms of human lives – more than 100,000 casualties in Algeria alone – and financial resources but also politically charged. It was a struggle for the

heart and soul of the Arab world. Had the Islamists won this struggle, the new order would have dramatically shifted the balance of social and political forces domestically and realigned Arab foreign policies as well.

The world, particularly the Western powers, did not just sit on the sidelines and observe the bloody, prolonged fight but also indirectly joined the fray and supported the existing political order. In many ways, the struggle for the Arab world affected the vital interests of the great powers and their ability to maintain and project influence.

Although initially embattled and besieged, by the end of the 1990s the Arab political order finally contained the threat from fringe Islamist groups by crushing their military capability, arresting, and killing most of their effective leaders. For example, both the Egyptian and the Algerian governments succeeded in neutralizing the Islamist threat and restoring relative calm in their societies. But the costs for state - society relations have been staggering. Institutional reforms and liberalization have been postponed and human rights and civil liberties have received a setback. Far from hammering a nail in the coffin of the authoritarian Arab state, the Islamist revdt empowered the existing regimes, consolidated and unleashed their security apparatus against society. It is the iron law of intended consequences where political actions often produce opposite results.

Although for now Middle Eastern regimes have eliminated the military threat represented by radical Islamists, the Islamist wave is far from being a spent political force. It

would be dangerously shortsighted to pen the political obituaries of the Islamist movements. The opposite is true. Islamists remain the most powerful, active opposition group in all Arab/Muslim societies.

One of the indirect results of the bloody struggle between militant Islamists and the ruling elite is that popular culture, along with important segments of the elite, has been Islamized from within. The irony is that radical Islamists failed to seize power, but their discourse and ethos permeate many aspects of state and society: they lost the war but they have won the public debate. Ironically, now mainstream Islamic activists compete effectively with the state, which uses a similar discourse, for the hearts and minds of marginalized and alienated believers. Mainstream Islamism appears to have appropriated the social agenda and questions of public morality in most Middle Eastern societies. Even former leaders of militant Islamist groups, along with mainstream Islamists, are attempting to recuperate and enter the political field by establishing legitimate political parties.

Most Arab governments have blocked these attempts and have intensified their crackdown against both militant and mainstream Islamism. On the whole, they have succeeded in neutralizing the immediate threat posed by Islamists but they have failed to address the dismal sociopolitical and economic conditions that have poured fuel on the raging Islamist fire. For as the late Nazih Ayubi convincingly argued, "the main cause behind the surge in political Islam, is a 'developmental crisis', whereas many new social forces have been unleashed without

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their energies being politically absorbed and without their economic and social expectations being satisfied." Growing unemployment, coupled with misdistribution of resources, and the absence of outlets for political dissent and expression, create armies of angry, disillusioned, and resentful youths who are natural recruiting grounds for violent protest groups. Revolutionary Islamic activism feeds mainly on unemployment, poverty, political alienation, and marginalization, not just religious zealotry and indoctrination.

In this context, the failure of revolutionary Islamism does not imply that the overall performance of the Arab state has been a success. The Arab political order faces overwhelming social, economic, and political problems. And as long as the vacuum and the crisis of legitimate authority persists, Islamists will continue trying to fill this political vacuum and threaten the very foundation of the secular authoritarian Arab order.

#### **The Case of Hizbullah**

Unlike the Egyptian, Algerian, and other fellow Islamists, Hizbullah did not fall into the trap of a confrontation with the Lebanese state. Yes, in the early 1980s during the height of the civil war, the Party of God directed its guns not just against secular and Christian opposition forces but also against the plural Lebanese formula. One of its planks clearly aimed at building an Islamic state on the ashes of the liberal Lebanese entity. Hizbullah also kidnapped civilians, both Lebanese and foreigners, initiated assassinations and engaged in other forms of terrorism. It acted more like any of the other

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thuggish militias than a legitimate political party, and both its posture and conduct was grounded in shadowy designs and underground activities. Hizbullah never shied away from its Iranian inheritance and served Tehran's regional and foreign policies. For all intents and purposes, Hizbullah's beginning was a negation of the very foundation of Lebanon as a plural, secular, multi-religious, multi-ethnic experiment. Hizbullah was initially determined to subvert Lebanon's very existence and establish Allah's kingdom on earth along the same rigid lines of those of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini. It hoped to extend Iranian influence to Lebanon as well as to fertilize its secular soil with revolutionary Islamism.

Indeed, Hizbullah's creation was a tall, ambitious order. Keep in mind though that events in the 1980s appeared promising and conducive to radical change, thanks to the Islamic revolution in Iran which destroyed one of the pivotal pro-Western, secular regimes in the Middle East and unleashed a powerful storm that threatened the stability and security of the existing political order, not just in the Gulf but also in the Arab East. Ayatollah Khomeini never minced any words about his intention of exporting revolutionary Islamism to other Arab and Muslim countries, including Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and others. In particular, Iraq and Lebanon were prime targets because of their large Shiite communities as well as the historical and religious ties that bind them with their co-religionists in Iran. The Iranian revolution sowed the seeds of dramatic change in both societies by bringing to the surface important social forces that have left their imprint on the

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political landscape. In Iraq the balance of power favored the ruling establishment which attempted to preempt and undermine the rising social forces by going to war against Iran, thus delaying the process of change.

In Lebanon the situation was different from that of Iraq and it favored the pro-Iranian elements. A host of circumstances and conditions converged and produced the Hizbullah phenomenon, a new mobilized power that remains a force to be reckoned with, not just on the Lebanese scene but also on the regional one as well. The Iranian revolution might have provided the ideological fuel that empowered Hizbullah's motor and strengthened its presence and role in the Lebanese war. But as important, Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the subsequent confrontation between Hizbullah and the Israeli occupying forces in the South transformed the Party of God politically and ideologically.

Instead of remaining enmeshed in the internal upheaval that bled Lebanon since 1975, in the early 1980s Hizbullah recognized the opportunities provided by the Israeli invasion and shifted gears by turning its guns and energy against the foreign occupation. This shift in strategy and tactics represented one of the shrewdest and most intelligent moves undertaken by Hizbullah. It was much easier to mobilize the community of believers against a well-defined external enemy than a domestic rival, and to portray the conflict as a clash between the forces of good – Hizbullah resisting occupation on behalf of all Lebanese citizens as well as Arabs and Muslim – and the forces of "Great Satan" as represented by Israel and its

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patron, the United States. Unlike its Islamist counterparts elsewhere, Hizbullah did not succumb to the temptation and obsession of seizing and capturing power by brutal force regardless of the costs to society, thanks to Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon that saved Hizbullah against itself.

While in the 1980s and 1990s Islamists elsewhere in the Arab world fought bloody battles against the established regimes, targeting secular opposition in the process, Hizbullah practiced and perfected its military skills and talents against Israeli troops in Southern Lebanon and their internal allies. While other Arab Islamists failed to cultivate or sustain a strong social base of support, Hizbullah allied itself closely with both the state and important segments of society. In contrast to Islamist groups elsewhere, which have alienated many people by accusing writers and artists of blasphemy and dragging them into court, Hizbullah has recently shown a healthy measure of respect for freedom of expression. Of course, it remains to be seen if this shift is just tactical or rather strategic.

By the end of 1990s, while militant Islamists lost the war on the battlefield in almost every Arab state, particularly in Egypt and Algeria, and were thus discredited in the eyes of their publics and the world, Hizbullah succeeded in delivering shattering blows to the Israeli army and gained respect and influence in Lebanon and the region. As one Egyptian Islamist activist told this writer, "Hizbullah is fortunate to have Israel occupying parts of the country because it focuses its energies and resources on the important fight against the Zionist enemy

instead of being drawn into a bloodbath against illegitimate local authorities.” This belated acknowledgment testifies to the shrewdness of Hizbullah in comparison with other Islamists movements, which got embroiled in brutal fights against their own governments and societies.

On the whole, the existence and presence of an external enemy, Israel, served to unify the country and divert attention from internal tensions and dissensions. The Lebanese war, 1975-1990, devastated state and civil society and exposed the bankruptcy of the warring militias. Although the end of the Lebanese conflict did not usher in a new broad, inclusive nationalist pact, people were fed up with sectarian violence and political warfare. Although most political factions were jockeying for influence and office, Hizbullah projected a higher posture and attitude and came across as defending Lebanese sovereignty and honor. Although in the early 1980s, Hizbullah acted conventionally like any other militia, by the end of the decade its new discourse stressed the need for national unity and sought to build bridges to the other communities. Time and again, Hizbullah made it clear that it had no intention of encroaching on or replacing the state in the liberated southern territories. It refrained from being entangled in Lebanon’s corrupt politics and kept its focus on the ultimate prize – expelling Israel from the South and emerging as the most effective resistance movement in the Arab world. Indeed, by the end of the 1990s, Hizbullah captured the hearts and minds of not only many Lebanese citizens but also Muslims worldwide.

### **The Shahid Foundation: A Case Study in Political and Military Mobilization**

The story of Hizbullah’s success against Israel cannot be fully understood except by examining the strategies devised by its leadership to mobilize the Shiite community and motivate them to join in a prolonged and costly Jihad. How did the leadership recruit an effective army of volunteers to fight Israeli troops and die in the process? How did the Hizbullah chiefs maintain their Shiite community’s high level of commitment and mobilization? What mechanisms and instruments did they use to bind their community closely to their cause? What lies at the roots of Hizbullah’s efficacy on the social mobilizational level? What is the relative weight of religion in relation to material incentives in their mobilizational strategies?

All these questions are critically addressed by this informative study, “The Shahid Foundation”, an important Hizbullah institution whose basic function lies in making the individual subordinate to the broader goal of the Party. This function “like the body, is seen as a complex set of interdependent systems, including an immune system that provides for self-healing in times of foreign incursion or injury. The propagation of this ideology among its constituency makes the Foundation a key source for motivating the prospective *shahid*” [martyr] [p. 29, all quotations refer to the following study]. In other words, “The Shahid Foundation” promotes the ideology of the *shahid* as well as instills in the psychology of



the community and the individual the sacredness of martyrdom and sacrifice. It "glorifies death in Jihad as it has established the cult of martyr within the body social" [p. 61].

This culture of martyrdom has become so deeply embedded in the communal psychology that the death of an active *shahid*, notes the author, "ensures greater social prestige for his family (even to the extent of envy), something of which he is well aware. So honourable has the task of the *shahid* become that, according to the Foundation, when the school children in the Hizbullah fiefdoms and its education centers are asked what they want to do when they grow up, their answer usually falls into one of three fields: engineering, medicine, and *shahid*" [p. 29]. In a survey conducted by the Foundation in these educational centers, more than 50 percent of the children said they only wanted to be a *shahid*. Essays written by children in schools funded by Hizbullah also indicate that nearly every teen in this community dreams of becoming a doctor, engineer, or a *shahid*. Even the *mujahideen* wives, notes the study, wish that, if necessary, "their husbands die on the battlefield. Their children's ambition is to become a *shahid*, and their families hold a privilege place (one many envy) in society" [p. 61].

These striking figures and findings testify to Hizbullah's effectiveness in indoctrinating not only young, dedicated Shiite men, who joined its cells and brigades in the deadly fight against Israeli occupying forces but also school children, who dream of growing up to become *shuhada'* [martyrs]. For some alarmed observers, it is the exposure to

Islamic education that makes Hizbullah so "seductive to young people". Hela Jaber, specialist on the Party of God, argues that the "manipulative tactics of Hizbullah being strategically implemented through the programs of the social welfare foundations" are used to indoctrinate the nation's youth.

In this context, "The Shahid Foundation" plays a critical role in preparing a new generation of *shuhada'* through a complex process of religious indoctrination, social elevation of martyrdom, and an emphasis on Jihad as part of a religious duty and social obligation. Everything that the Foundation does revolves around the culture of martyrdom, its sacredness, beauty, and essence. The *shahid* stands taller than life at the epicenter of this culture, proud, defiant, and spiritually and morally superior to his peers. Thus the lines become blurred between the human aspects of *Shahada* [martyrdom] and the spiritual ones. As *Takaful*, one of Hizbullah's magazines put it: "The *shahid* is a human who has reached the pinnacle of humanity" [p. 62]. *Takaful* was likely paraphrasing Khomeini who said, "Fight through *Shahada* because *Shahada* is the essence of history". Simply put, "The Shahid Foundation" has succeeded in entrenching in the Hizbullah society a "certain cult of the martyr" rooted in a "cultural realm constituted in Islam which founds its general scheme" [ibid].

Much more than just social prestige appears to be attached to the *Shahada*. This study shows how the Culture Institute, a small sub-unit within the Foundation, aims at preserving the remains of the *shahid* and transforming them into memories and objects of culture. A number of "museums"

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have been established throughout Hizbullah areas to display the remains of the *shahid*, such as clothes worn or rags stained with blood at the instant of the *Shahada*. Videos are also shown of the actual operations leading to the *Shahada* and the purpose is to depict the "spirit" of the *Shahada* and the heroism of the *shahid*. These powerful symbols and rituals get imprinted in the communal memories and tend to be very effective in perpetuating the culture of martyrdom and preparing a "new generation of *shahids*". As a school director noted, many of the children who visit the shrines organized by the museums leave wanting to become a *shahid*. Regardless of what one thinks of these measures as either propaganda or brain washing, the study shows that the Foundation has succeeded in its mandate to mobilize the Shiite community to join the Jihad against Israel as well as to indoctrinate youths to the extent of sacrificing their life for the cause.

Political and ideological indoctrination partly explains Hizbullah's ability to sustain and consolidate support within the Shiite community. However there is more to Hizbullah's influence than politics and ideology. After all, armies and *mujahideen* cannot march on empty stomachs. To its credit, Hizbullah has used social services to establish its popularity and promote its ideology. "The Shahid Foundation" does not only have the Culture Institute, whose focus is ideological, but it also has the Health and Social Institutes, which provide critical welfare and social services to Hizbullah's constituencies. The latter are as important as the former in keeping people loyal to Hizbullah and swelling its ranks.

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The study also shows how Hizbullah has used its authority on the social matrix to wield a stick and carrot policy in order to reward adherents and punish dissenters. For example, Hizbullah has made sure to provide welfare to the *shahid* families, particularly their children. In fact, the children of the *shahid* are privileged because they receive quality education – children of similar background receive much poorer education in areas where government schools barely exist. The *shahid* families also receive free health care, which is vital in a country where social security does not exist. The average Lebanese citizen spends more than 40 percent of her or his income on medical expenses.

The point to highlight is that one should not underestimate the importance of the social matrix in Hizbullah's overall strategy to recruit, mobilize and consolidate its influence within the Shiite community. The social and economic incentives tie the community intimately to Hizbullah and enable the latter to exercise considerable influence within it.

The number of people dependent on Hizbullah's social services is staggering. One of the main strengths of this study is that it is based on field research, interviews, and credible statistics. Take Dahhyat, for example, one of Hizbullah's major fiefdoms in Beirut. The study points to the fact that 90 percent of all those who live in Dahhyat are either related to at least one *shahid* or *mujahed* and hence a candidate for *Shahada*. Almost every family has an affiliation with "The Shahid

Foundation", either as salaried employees or as volunteers.

"Thus, it is only logical to deduce that this Foundation has a presence in every family in the Dahhyat for nearly every member of the society belongs to it. This truth ingrains the Foundation in society. Both society and the Shahid Foundation depend on the same resource: the people inhabiting the Hizbullah fiefdom. Their relation is defined such as the foundation institutionalizes the contribution of every individual to the Jihad and *Shahada*. In sum, the Foundation is omnipresent in the lives of every family inhabiting the Hizbullah fiefdoms" [p. 56].

Hizbullah's leadership has succeeded in translating the web of ties – health clinics, hospitals, social and educational services, and others – binding the Shiite community to "The Shahid Foundation" into concrete political currency. For example, in the 1992 and 1996 parliamentary elections, the Foundation mobilized all its resources in support of the Party's candidates, thus employing its social welfare program in the service of Hizbullah's electoral machine and promoting its popularity.

The critical point is that Hizbullah's institutions, particularly "The Shahid Foundation", lie at the root of its electoral success. Both aspects, add this study, establish Hizbullah's dominion over the body social in its fiefdoms: "This dominion ensured that the body social would cast its ballot for Hizbullah because failure to do so would be noted and punished" [p. 59]. Indeed, according to this study, in the 1992 and 1996 elections, the stick was used against those who

did not vote for the Party. These families were immediately excluded from the services provided by "The Shahid Foundation" and "ostracized". The author of the study observed first hand during her field research how Hizbullah used the carrot and stick approach to enforce the Islamic way of life and co-opt society. Although she argues that the Party no longer uses physical force to "[bend] people to its will", its use of the carrot and stick method "reinforces the belief that it still rules by fear, not 'love'" [p. 90].

In this context, a thin line separates the social from the political. The two blend into each other and complement one another. Here lies the secret to Hizbullah's success and popularity. "The Shahid Foundation" represents a fascinating case study of social and political mobilization that has propelled Hizbullah into parliament and has made it a power to be reckoned with on the national and regional stage.

#### The Future of Hizbullah?

The big question is, whether Hizbullah will be able to adjust and adapt to the new conditions in Lebanon, the region, and the world at large? How will Hizbullah respond if a sweeping Arab-Israeli peace settlement is signed? Will the Party's institutions reorient their mission and *raison d'être*, which are based on the Jihad against the Zionist entity and on glorifying the culture of Jihad? Or will the cult of martyrdom, which has become deeply embedded in the communal psychology, handicap its reason for existence after the resolution of the Arab - Israeli conflict? To what extent is Hizbullah a one-dimensional project, or is it more complex

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than just that? In other words, will Hizbullah be able to shed its ideological skin and evolve like other political, pragmatic entities? How successful has been the process of "Lebanonisation" within Hizbullah and has it cut the umbilical cord with Iran?

The study makes it clear that since its establishment in the early 1980s Hizbullah has come a long way and has evolved considerably. Far from being frozen in time and place, the Party has been able to moderate its revolutionary rhetoric and project a more pragmatic image by making tactical concessions, while maintaining its strategic focus. For example, the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon remains part of Hizbullah's covenant, though its leaders, when pressed on this issue, often declare that at this historical juncture building an Islamic state is impractical in multi-religious, multi-ethnic Lebanon. They would like to have it both ways – project a flexible face and remain true to the ideal. One wonders how the Hizbullah leadership would act if and when reality and idealism clash. Which project would they sacrifice and at what expense?

There is no consensus among observers of Hizbullah on whether the Party has made a strategic decision to disregard its long-term ideological agenda and accept the nuanced Lebanese formula. Some analysts stress that Hizbullah's active engagement in the political arena indicates that its "rivalry" with the Lebanese state may have been exaggerated. They point to Hizbullah's cooperation and coordination with the state to expel Israeli troops from the South and note that the Party has

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gradually and steadily evolved and matured as a result of its baptism of blood and fire against a foreign enemy. Hizbullah, it is argued, is no longer an alien entity struggling against the state, but an accepted opponent in the political field. As the vice secretary of Hizbullah, Sheikh Naim Kasseem asserted: "We have entered parliament in order to make ourselves heard from within". According to this logic, Hizbullah acts more from within than without.

An opposing view contends that Hizbullah's social service foundations are "parallel institutions to those of the state" and even their existence represents a threat to its authority. Waddah Sharara, a political commentator, is the leading exponent of this hypothesis; he claims further that Hizbullah's strategic goal is to build a "state within a state" and replace the Maronite hegemony over Lebanon with an Islamic state. These critics point to the fact that the Party is still deeply beholden and indebted to regional powers, particularly Shiite Iran, and that the allegiance of its followers is first and foremost to Hizbullah and then to the Lebanese state. Hizbullah, this argument goes, cannot be trusted to put Lebanon's national interests above its regional allies; rather, it would not hesitate to sacrifice the former at the altar of the latter.

Critics of Hizbullah point to its record since Israel retreated militarily from Southern Lebanon as a disturbing example of brinkmanship and an inability to transform itself from a liberation movement to a developmental one. That means, Hizbullah's initial reflectiveness and restraint has given way to inflated discourse and misguided brinkmanship. Since

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October 2000, Hizbullah has inaugurated a new military campaign to liberate the disputed Shebaa Farms despite the inherent security costs to the country and the international consequences as well. Regardless of how just its cause, the reactivation of Hizbullah's attacks on Israeli troops in the occupied Shebaa Farms threatens to engulf Lebanon in bloodshed and turn its humble achievement into strategic defeat. Once again, critics assert that Hizbullah is acting at the behest of regional actors without regard to Lebanon's national and security interests, thus endangering internal peace.

More importantly, the Hizbullah leadership, trapped in the discourse of confrontation and liberation, does not appreciate the seriousness and challenge of socio-political and economic development. The latter may be more difficult than the military conflict with Israel. Are there any hurdles that can undermine Hizbullah's transition from the mentality of resistance to that of citizenship? And will the Party devote its energy to politics and gradually shed its paramilitary character? Can the culture of martyrdom, which for so long defined the very existence of Hizbullah, be replaced and transcended by the culture of development, broadly defined?

Hizbullah's two-pronged challenge is existential, not technical. Its *raison d'être* was defined as the establishment of an Islamic state and the expulsion of Israeli occupying troops from Lebanon. Neither of these goals remains relevant. Can a Party, which was born out of the wombs of martyrdom and war, survive and prosper in a state of peace?

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## ABSTRACT

The social service foundations, once the backbone of Hizbullah's movance into the political arena, have undergone many changes to keep up with what is referred to as Hizbullah's Lebanonisation. However, will the foundations pose an obstacle to further change in paradigms?

This study examines the *Jihad al Bina Foundation* and *Al Shahid Foundation*: Their birth, purpose, structure, and accomplishments.

It will also highlight and analyse the foundation's impact on Hizbullah's social matrix. The results of the 1992 and 1996 elections provide the material needed to conduct the study. At this stage, the aim is to examine the charity and genuineness of the services provided by *Jihad al Bina*, and *Al Shahid foundation*.

What must be determined is whether it promoted Hizbullah popularity at the grassroots level or if it expanded Hizbullah's "territoriality" through fear?

The final section examines the dichotomy between the social service foundations' public image and the beliefs on which they are founded. The study notes that *Jihad al Bina* and *Al Shahid* foundations were able to successfully adapt to and enhance Hizbullah's Lebanonisation by hiding their true self behind a facade.

Yet, such a dilemma may counter the achievements provided by these social service foundations, giving rise to the question: Will the foundations, which have anchored the Hizbullah movance from a militia to a political party, now present an obstacle to peace?

## THE SHAHID FOUNDATION

### 1. The *Shahid Foundation*

#### A. Origin

The *Shahid al Thawarawi Foundation*,<sup>1</sup> to give it its full name, was created exactly one day after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.<sup>2</sup> The principal mover behind its emergence was Iran. The Ayatollah Khomeini promoted the *Shahid al Thawarawi Foundation* during the post-revolution period and ensured the Foundation received material and spiritual support. Iranian clergy were sent to Lebanon and commandeered positions at the very top of the Foundation's hierarchy.

#### B. General Aim

The *Shahid Foundation* was created in reaction to the Israeli invasion. Its founding aim was to support the Islamic Resistance or *muquawamat*. In this respect, it identified two types of revolutionary martyrs: the casualties of Israeli shelling,

<sup>1</sup> Arabic term for "Revolutionary Martyr".

<sup>2</sup> This information has been withdrawn from the *Shahid's* prospectus but was confirmed in an interview with the Foundation's managers.

bombing, or jailing<sup>3</sup> and those who willingly and intentionally shed blood on the front lines for the *muquawamat*. The former is the passive kind of shahid while the latter is considered as the "true" *mujahed* (the fighter who leads the Jihad), the *shahid* (martyr). Accordingly, the Foundation sought to provide material support for these individuals. In this respect, these individuals' association with the Foundation increased their and their family's standing in the community. The *shahid* is looked at as a hero and his name is thus to "ring as high as the bells of heaven where he is heading".<sup>4</sup>

### C. Function of the Foundation

1. Preservation of society. "As Lebanese and as Muslims, the struggle to preserve our society is the best way to support the *muquawamat*."<sup>5</sup>

According to its director, the *Shahid Foundation* supports the *muquawamat* by promoting a collectivist and organic view of the society of Islamic resistance. The individual must be subordinate to the broader goal of the

<sup>3</sup> Accounts of prisoner treatment in these jails can be found in a number of Amnesty International articles: "*Les detenus de Khiam, tortures et mauvais traitements*", May 1992; "*Les Otages Oublies D'Israel: Les prisonniers Libanais en Israel et dans le centre de detention de Khiam*", 1997; "*Le Monde Diplomatique*", *De Beyrouth a Khiam, un meme systeme*", April 1986.

<sup>4</sup> Expression used in an interview with Hajj Chami, Foundation director.

<sup>5</sup> From a Friday prayer made by Sayyed Nasrallah, Hizbullah secretary general, in July 1995.

movement, which, like the body, is seen as a complex set of interdependent systems, including an immune system that provides for self-healing in times of foreign incursion or injury. The propagation of this ideology among its constituency makes the Foundation a key source for motivating the prospective *shahid*.

### 2. Support the *shahid's* family

The effectiveness of those at the front of the struggle can only be secured if the material and spiritual support of their families are guaranteed. Thus the Foundation educates the children of the *shahids* and provides financial assistance to their wives.

The death of an active *shahid* ensures greater social prestige for his family (even to the extent of envy), something of which he is well aware. So honourable has the task of the *shahid* become that, according to the Foundation, when the schoolchildren in the Hizbullah fiefdoms and its education centres are asked what they want to do when they grow up, their answer usually falls into one of three fields: engineering, medicine, and *shahid*.<sup>6</sup>

### 2. Structure of the Foundation

The Foundation has a pyramidal structure, which is based on entrenched discipline and obedience. At its base are

<sup>6</sup> Based on a questionnaire conducted by the Foundation in schools and educational centres 85% opted for one of the three professions. More than 50% said they only wanted to be a *shahid*.

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the ordinary inhabitants of the Hizbullah fiefdoms. At its summit are the leaders of Hizbullah.

The Foundation is made up of five institutes, distinguishable in terms of their functions and the human resources they draw on. The Culture Institute's task is to promote the ideology of the *shahid*. The Check and Balance Institute is responsible for monitoring and providing for the families of the *shahid*. The Health Institute organises health services for the families of the *shahid*, and the Social Institute is responsible for their education. The most important is the *Takaful*<sup>7</sup> Institute, which was established to provide financial independence for the Foundation. The *Takaful* Institute's director Hajj Shami is also the director of the Foundation.

Beneath Hajj Shami is a committee made up of the directors of the other institutes, all of whom have roughly equal influence. The delegates of the Social Institute occupy the third level. There also are area representatives and members of the *Dahhyat* quarters' sub-committees.

Hizbullah divides Lebanon into five different areas: Beirut, the South, North, Bequaa, and the *Dahhyat* or suburb of Beirut. The *Dahhyat* is divided into quarters: Burj al-Barajnet, Hay al-Sullum, Bir al-Abd and Shayyah. To ensure proper representation, the Foundation assigns delegates from each of its institutes to each area and quarter. Subcommittees, which constitute the fourth level of the Foundation's hierarchy, are

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<sup>7</sup> *Takaful* means "to take under one's wing". It is not the same as adoption per se, as this is forbidden in Islam.

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formed.

The leadership organisation allows the Foundation's influence to extend over all *shahid* families. For instance, there are 157 *shahid* families in Bir al-Abd. To adequately meet the needs of these families, the Foundation assigns a delegate from each of its six institutes to the quarter. This constitutes a subcommittee that oversees work in the quarter. Work is done out of an office in Bir al-Abd, usually nothing more than a converted apartment in one of the quarter's buildings. The extent of these delegates' work, however, requires the recruitment of a number of salaried employees and volunteers. The latter constitute the fifth and sixth levels of the pyramid respectively. Each worker reports to his supervising delegate. Hence, every institute in itself is organised in a pyramidal hierarchy.

### A. Overview of the Foundation structure.

The Foundation's structure of authority is based on the formal independence of its hierarchically organised constitutive parts, which are effectively co-ordinated by the overall hierarchy. Such a system has positive and negative features.

The independence of the institutes means that the whole would survive, even if one suffered a crisis or collapsed. The organisation of power in each institute has proved efficient in meeting the goal of providing welfare to the *shahid* families. The organisation's most important success is its ability to claim competence over its client group. The Foundation has become a central part of the social life of its constituency. It regulates



relationships between those who work for it, and it protects its supporters.

On the other hand, the strict top-down order of the overall hierarchy lends itself to the control of the membership to the extent in which dissent is not lightly entered into. Fear against speaking out against superiors may be damaging to the social welfare functions of the organisation, as lack of dissent can lead to inefficiency and the isolation of decision-making from those most effected. The constant surveillance of subordinates does little for inspiring mutual trust between the organisation's different levels. Thus, the strictly controlled hierarchy of the Foundation may be detrimental, in some respects, to the *shahid* families.

#### B. Institutes of the Foundation

1. Social Institute: "Our students score 100% success in the official exams."<sup>8</sup>

The Social Institute is responsible for educating the children of the *shahid*. It established schools and technical centres exclusively designed to provide for these children's education. The Institute owns several schools such as the *Rawdat*, 1993, with a capacity for 750 children. The *Shahid al Tarbawy* education centre, 1996, was designed to educate 2,000 students at all levels and ages. It features a nursing department, primary and secondary levels, a lecture theatre, a *Mussalla*, a clinic, special labs, facilities for the disabled,

<sup>8</sup> Cited from *Takaful* magazine, n. 4.

playgrounds and parks.<sup>9</sup> These facilities are intended to compete with the best. The children of the *shahid* are privileged — children of a similar background receive much poorer education in areas where government schools barely exist.<sup>10</sup> The Social Institute also establishes technical schools the *Rasoul al-A'zam* for instance, which was founded in 1990, where computing, management, and the arts are taught.

#### 2. The Health Institute: "A non-pro policy"<sup>11</sup>

This institute provides for the medical needs of the family of the *shahid* and injured *mujaheds*. Although medical care is not provided to them exclusively, they receive preferential treatment. The *shahid* families receive free health care. The rest must pay a nominal fee. The medical provision secured by the Institute is vital in a country where social security does not exist. The average Lebanese citizen in Beirut spends more than 40% of his income in medical expenses.

However, for those living in the "doomed" areas such as the *Dahhyat* or any of the southern villages, which are subject to almost daily shelling or air strikes, medical care in the past was simply absent. No hospitals or clinics existed until the creation of the Health Institute. In 1988, the Institute opened the *Rasoul al-A'zam Hospital* on the birthday of the prophet — hence its name. "This hospital was built in response to the

<sup>9</sup> Hizbullah prospectus.

<sup>10</sup> Free state education is not available in Lebanon.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Ahmed al Masari, manager of *Rasoul al-A'zam Hospital*.

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urgent need of the inhabitants of the *Dahhyat*.<sup>12</sup> It started with 14 beds and two operation rooms. Today, the hospital has been developed to the highest standards. It has six emergency rooms, 87 beds, and a staff of 145 nurses and 100 doctors. However, in an area that covers 800,000 inhabitants, it still is too small to provide comprehensive care and "the hospital is always under pressure."<sup>13</sup>

*Rasoul al-A'zam Hospital* has a list of 1,800 *Shahid* family members who may receive preferential treatment. These families, when making appointments, are given priority. They also are given the best rooms and nurses attend to them specially. *Rasoul al-A'zam* is not the only hospital the Institute has established. It also opened the *Sheikh Ragheb Harb Hospital* and a number of clinics, including several travelling clinics.

*Sheikh Ragheb Hospital* is located in Toul in Nabatya. It is situated at the centre of 57 villages in the South. The hospital has a capacity of 220 beds, provides medical care to 3,000 patients, and travels to treat patients in their homes free of charge.

3. The Culture Institute: "To establish and preserve the culture of the martyr."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Interview with hospital manager, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> The following information was provided by a museum employee who works in the *Dahhyat* quarter but cannot be named.

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The Culture Institute aims at preserving the remains of the *shahid* and transforming them into memories and objects of culture. To achieve its goal, the Institute established a number of "museums". In effect, these are converted apartments located in Hizbullah quarters or villages. The Institute redecorates and redesigns these apartments before displaying the remains of the *shahid* in them. The museums are established in the town where the *shahid* was born.

There is no entrance fee, though donation boxes for contributions to the resistance are placed at each museum. The exhibits vary — pieces of the clothes the *shahid* was wearing at the instant of the *Shahada* are displayed to depict his heroism. Sometimes, these are rags still stained with blood. Pictures of the *shahid* in combat uniform are juxtaposed with family photos of the *shahid* holding his children, looking at his wife or kissing the hands of his parents. The Koran he used to read is kept behind glass, opened to the page of *fatiha*, and prayers said for the soul of the dead.

The *shahid's* artistic and intellectual skills may also be displayed such as drawings, paintings, poems, and prose dedicated to his wife, children, parents, God, Hizbullah, and the Islamic Resistance. Last but not least is the testament of the *shahid*. There seems to be a general pattern in the way in which the wills are prepared. In the first part, the *shahid* explains his motives for his sacrifice for the *Jihad*. There is always an emphasis on the voluntary aspect of the act. Quotes of verses from the Koran that justify *Jihad* follow. Next, the *shahid* cites the reason for the *Shahada*, their ultimate goal. At the end, he

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addresses a few words to the family, his parents first and then his wife.

All the testaments are hand-written by the *mujahed* the moment he becomes a candidate for *Shahada*. It is sent to his family and displayed in the museums. Example copies can be found in the appendix to this chapter.

Also in the museum is the video taken during the mission in which the *shahid* falls. Usually the video is taped by one of his comrades. The original version is displayed, unedited and without commentary. Copies of the videos are for sale and the benefits channelled directly to support the *muquawamat*. The videos contain little that can be construed as a narrative account: shaky screen features; a bit of sky; a lot of ground; shadows of soldiers running, shouting "*Allah Akbar*" and reciting verses from the Koran, and the Hizbullah flag. The video captures the sounds of shots being fired and bombs going off as well as footage of the bodies of soldiers and, finally, the *shahid*.

Obviously, the videos do not aim to detail the strategy of the mission or even to identify those participating in it. It does not allow the viewer to identify the bodies of the fallen soldiers but it does provide a viewing of a mission in which the *shahid* fell. For the few minutes the video is shown, the audience is able to experience the *Jihad*. For what is depicted on screen is what the cameraman sees.

When the *shahid* is shot, viewers can't help but feel the loss of the fall of a brother in arms. The aim of the video is to

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depict the "spirit" of the *Shahada*. The images do not provide a clear identification of where the event occurs or the persons participating: it is the spiritual message that is important. And judging from the number of videos sold, this goal has been met.<sup>15</sup>

The Culture Institute is one of the smallest in the *Shahid Foundation* but it plays an important role. Its organisation of the shrines to the martyrs has, in effect, prepared a new generation of *shahids*. According to a school director, many of the children who visit the shrines leave wanting to become a *shahid*.

### 4. *Takaful* Institute: "To preserve the *shahid* family"<sup>16</sup>

Originally designed to provide for the welfare of the children of the *shahid*, this institute, after the Israeli invasion of 1982 and the increase in the number of martyrs, expanded its duties to include the family of the *shahid*. *Takaful* means to take responsibility for. The project provides for the needs of the children after their father's *Shahada*. More importantly, it provides opportunities for their future.

The *Takaful* Institute pledges, first, to ensure the children's psychological well being. It is the Institute's task to ensure that, after the death of the *shahid*, the children experience the least possible disruption to their life. For

<sup>15</sup> One director of a museum displaying *shahid* memorials told me that virtually all new visitors buy a video.

<sup>16</sup> Information for this section is drawn from the prospectus of the project.

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instance, it provides support for the whole family on the assumption that a stable family environment is best for the child. The Institute's aim is to preserve the family's financial status prior to the *shahid's* death and to improve it as a reward for his martyrdom.

Providing support for the *shahid's* family first requires the identification of a *kafil*, a benefactor who, via the *Takaful* Institute, provides monetary support for the family. The Institute uses the media to appeal for *kafils*. Both Hizbullah newspapers and broadcast media are used. For example, in the *Takaful* magazine, photos of *shahid* children are published on the inside front cover of every issue. The photos usually are of the children of recently deceased *shahids*. The Institute also uses the media to maintain its image and widen its audience base. Whenever possible, the Institute publishes in the Hizbullah press and other media, releases detailing its activities.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, the Institute sends out application forms to prospective *kafils*. Local residents are not the only ones targeted for this post. Émigrés living in the Gulf or in Africa also are encouraged to apply. The application form asks the *kafil* to state how much money he is prepared to donate during the course of the year and to indicate the child or children to benefit from this donation. It also asks the donor to apportion his money according to the immediate and future needs of the child/children. Once returned to the *Takaful* Institute, the

<sup>17</sup> Mainly in *Al Safir*.

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application becomes a binding contract between the *kafil* and the Foundation.

The *Takaful* Institute encourages children to establish direct contact with their *kafil* by sending letters, cards, poetry, photographs and so on. The Institute also encourages, when and where possible, meetings between benefactor and child. This bonding between the *kafil* and the child helps ensure the continued provision of financial support from the former to the latter.

All the donations the *kafil* makes are channelled through the Institute's treasury to the children of the *shahid*. The money received is used in such a way that the children of the *shahid* are relatively better off than their peers. They are registered in the best schools (i.e. the Foundation's schools) and are able to enrol in a wide variety of extracurricular activities.

The resources are equally distributed to avoid feelings of resentment among the children of the *shahid*. Yet, at the same time, the project is purposefully designed to make the children feel privileged because of the sacrifice made by their fathers.

As already mentioned, the *Takaful* Institute does not simply seek to meet the immediate needs of the children, it also looks to provide for their future: "Society needs to guarantee its orphans production capacity and enlarge the prospects of their opportunities in life."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Taakhy Project* prospectus.

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Thus, it sets up private bank accounts for each child. The *kafil* makes regular payments to the account. Under the terms of the contract the *kafil* has with the Institute, the amount of cash credited cannot be less than \$250 per year. The child cannot access his account until he completes his education. All *shahid* children are encouraged to attend university — 244 children of *shahid* are now benefiting from university grants, with 81 still awaiting sponsorships.<sup>19</sup> After graduation, the child of the *shahid* must show that he intends to participate in private business and that he will bear responsibility for a family. But even then, the *kafil* and the Institute can supervise the spending of the money deposited into his bank account. Additionally, any interest or profits made on money from the account is shared between the *kafil* and the Institute.

The *Takaful* Institute assumes responsibility for the child until he comes of age. Unlike other adoption projects, which usually restrict its scope to feeding and schooling young children, the *Takaful* Institute orients and helps the young man or woman. "It is especially then that he misses his father and our original purpose has been to replace this feeling with pride."<sup>20</sup> The *Takaful* Project has been successful. Note: 1,419 *shahid* children have benefit from the project (717 boys and 702 girls) and it's still going strong. A special *Takaful* magazine has been published and distributed, specially edited to contribute to the propaganda of this project.

<sup>19</sup> An *Al Shahid Foundation* manager supplied this information.

<sup>20</sup> Quote from the manager of the *Takaful* Project.

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a. Sister project — The *Taakhy* Project. The *Takaful* Institute has also developed a sister project: the *Taakhy*<sup>21</sup> Project. While the former aims at adopting the children of the *shahid*, the latter concentrates on the wives of the *shahid*. The following section will describe the aims and means of this sister project, established to help society heal from the inside.

#### i. Emphasis on the mother's role in society

The mother is responsible for the renewal of life. Hence, she not only carries the secrets of procreation but is also the teacher of the generations.<sup>22</sup> She educates the children and watches over them until they mature. She is the pillar of society. Her performance orients the lives of her children. Rooted in this theory and belief, the *Shahid Foundation* realises the important role these widows play in society. Thus it becomes a social duty to provide for their needs.

ii. The Islamisation of women's role: It is a Muslim duty to help the wives of *shahids*.

The role of the mother is anchored in Islam, as it is God who endowed her with such responsibilities. Such an assumption therefore elevates the act of supporting her to an Islamic imperative. "The West, or the non-Islamic world, has been discriminating against her under the 'false label of liberalisation of the women'." (quote attribution) The Foundation accuses the West of minimising the role of the

<sup>21</sup> The English translation of '*taakhy*' would be 'sisterhood'.

<sup>22</sup> From article on motherhood in '*Taakhy*' magazine, n. 2.

mother. "A pregnant woman is even considered a non-productive element."<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, in the West, mothers are enslaved in jobs that distract them from their original responsibilities. Maids replace the mothers who are occupied in a rivalry with men. Consequently, while technological progress is at its peak, social evolution is regressing at an increasing speed. The West is slowly awakening to this realisation as it listens to the agonising screams of a collapsing society.

In the Islamic world, the values establish a matrix that protects the society. The *Sunna* of life and the teachings of the Koran ensure that the society does not break down or collapse. It teaches women their responsibilities and establishes a shield, which restrains society from launching into misadventure. The Western nightmare can be avoided if one follows the teachings of Islam.

The *Taakhy* Project is based on the beliefs expressed above. In short, the woman/mother has an Islamic role and it is society's duty to support her to fulfil it. Hence, it is a Muslim imperative to provide to her needs and arm her with the appropriate tools. The former forbids her from participating in activities that would distract her from the home, such as working in an arena reserved for men, while the latter guarantees she has the adequate background and education she needs to properly raise her children.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

iii. Method: The means by which the Foundation attains its goals

The *Taakhy* Project assumes the protection of mothers, specifically those who lost their husbands to *Shahada* and are educating the children of the *shahid*. It is an extension of the *Takaful* Institute and project. It aims at safeguarding the family of the *shahid* — and consequently the entire society — from breaking down. To reach its goal, the project provides the wife of the *shahid* with all the material and psychological guarantees needed.

This project consists of finding *kafil*s to provide the money needed to meet the material needs of these women. This ensures that widows will not be forced to shoulder an economic burden after the death of their spouse. It is believed that to do so would distract these wives from their original role.

Hence, the *Takaful* Institute again functions as a mediator between the widows and the *kafil*. The latter pledges to pay a certain amount to the widow of the *shahid*. The money is safeguarded in a bank, which supervises the deposits made by the *kafil* (not less than \$300 a year) and the woman's withdrawal of the money.<sup>24</sup>

The *Taakhy* Project also assumes responsibility for the psychological well being of these women. Thus it mediates between the benevolent sisters and the wives of the *shahids*. The sisters provide moral support to the wives and help them

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<sup>24</sup> According to *Taakhy* prospectus.

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get over their loss. In fact, the sisters often are confidant and advisors to the wives. Their opinion often is sought before any decision is made, from punishing to rewarding a child to the issue of remarriage. The initial contact between the sister candidates and the wives of the *shahids* is made through activities hosted by the *Takaful* Institute (picnics and *Iftars*). The relationship is cultivated through visits and direct contacts made by the sisters, who, in turn, report the outcome of their visits to the Institute.

From 1995 to 1999, statistics show that 161 *shahid* wives — 77 in *Dahhyat*, 17 in Tyre, 39 in Nabatya, and 28 in the Bequaa — benefited from the services of the *Taakhy* Project. But there are instances when the wives of the *shahids* are no longer eligible to participate in the program. They are: when she remarries or when she does not fit into the Foundation's definition of a good Muslim, i.e. she does not conform to the *tchador* dress, does not praying or does not fast during *Ramadan*.

If the woman follows the "rules", she retains her title of *shahid* wife and always has a place of respect in society. If she doesn't, she becomes a social pariah and the Foundation takes her children away from her.

### 5. Check and Balance Institute: Its composition

It is clearly the families of the active *shahids* who benefit from the Foundation's services. Yet, the following will identify the people who make up the Institute and ensure that the projects are carried out and those who are in charge of

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ensuring that corruption is non-existent in the actions of institute volunteers and salaried officials.

Indeed, although this institute is the smallest in the Foundation, it is the most important. Its supervision ensures that all institutes under the Foundation operate smoothly. Moreover, it is also responsible for all those who benefit from the Foundation. This Institute ensures that the demands of every *shahid* family are met. In short, it guarantees the best allocation of the goods and energies of the Foundation and invests in safeguarding an adequate team in its realm.

It is the task of Check and Balance Institute to first look after the family of the *shahid* and follow its progress daily. Second, it supervises the Foundation's working team and preserves it from corruption. The latter is made possible because the Institute gathers information on everyone associated with the Foundation. Looking after the *shahid's* family is the more difficult of the two tasks as it requires special planning and structuring of the Institute's teams.<sup>25</sup> The following part will restrict its description of the Institute's team to the *Dahhyat* area of Beirut. The *Dahhyat* is divided into four quarters, *Burj al Barajnet*, *Hay al Sullom*, *Bir el Abd*, and *Shayyah*.<sup>26</sup> A *mushref* (supervisor) oversees each quarter. He

<sup>25</sup> Interview with the manager of the institute.

<sup>26</sup> A graph simplifies this description, cf. appendix. This information was provided by a *mushref* and confirmed by several others.

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is a salaried employee in the Institute, a *mutabeh*<sup>27</sup>

These *mushrefs* normally are all related to a *shahid*. He could be the father who lost a son or a brother to *Shahada* or a son who lost his father to *Shahada*. The *mushref's* job is to supervise over the well being of every *shahid* family and to ensure the Foundation achieves its purpose. However, these four *mushrefs* are not alone when carrying out their duties. For example, there are 157 *shahid* families in *Burj al Barajnet* and 160 in *Hay al Sullom*.<sup>28</sup> Hence, the *mushref* is supported by the *muta'tifs* (volunteers). The hierarchy between the salaried professional and the volunteer is implicit. One is officially employed by the Check and Balance Institute and makes weekly or daily reports in writing to his superior. The volunteer, on the other hand, is not compensated and provides informal, oral reports to the *mushref*. Yet, once a volunteer pledges to fulfil a task, he must carry it through. If he fails to meet the expectations of the *mushref* and disappoints the Institute and the Foundation, the *muta'tif* is discharged from his duty and ostracised. Indeed, all the families living in the *muta'tifs* quarter would be notified of his neglect, his name becomes a source of shame, and he becomes a social outcast.

Every *mushref* has under his authority 25 *muta'tifs*, who report any information gathered from the families of the *shahid*

<sup>27</sup> There is a distinction between the *mutabeh* and the *muta'atife* emphasized upon previously. Yet, the latter is recognised as the volunteer while the former is the salaried.

<sup>28</sup> Numbers given by the *mushrefs* themselves.

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that would benefit the Foundation. To get this information, the volunteers visit with the families of the *shahids* or help them with their problems.

We note that most of the *muta'tifs* are women because it is easier for them to make contact with families that no longer have a male authority figure. Female volunteers can easily enter the house of the *shahid* as a woman-woman relation is more socially acceptable than a male-female. Moreover, the relationship often develops into friendship between the two women.<sup>29</sup>

Every volunteer visits the family at least four times a month. They mediate between the families and the Foundation, establishing the following link: widow-volunteer-*mushref*.

This set up allows the continuous flow of feedback into the structure. The *mushrefs*, in turn, report to the representative of the Check and Balance Institute, who channels the information to the delegate of the area.

### C. Human resources of the Foundation

The motor of the *Shahid Foundation* is its human resource. At first, the salaried worker or the *muta'hidin* seems to be the engine driving the Foundation. It is their job to provide services to the *shahid* families. The income they earn is among the highest paid to workers in Lebanon, especially those

<sup>29</sup> According to the institute manager.



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living in these areas,<sup>30</sup> which could explain their dedication to their work.

The *muta'hidin*, however, are a minority in the *Shahid Foundation* where the *muta'tifs*, or volunteers, make up the majority. Moreover, these volunteers share the same enthusiasm, devotion and dedication as their paid counterparts. They all are distinguished by a certain degree of obedience to the Foundation's hierarchy.

Both *muta'hidin* and *muta'tifs* are convinced of the Foundation's divine purpose. It is a Muslim duty to support the *Jihad*. Their motivation springs from the idea that even the most minor task done is a human contribution to the divine aim. This belief deepens their sense of responsibility, for they are responsible in front of God. It also instils obedience, for God, not man, is at the top of the hierarchy. Thus every task performed is elevated to a divine standard. This notion of divine, which is at the core of the Foundation's purpose, enhances the performance of its workers and establishes obedience and responsibility. It also justifies the omnipresence of this Foundation in the lives of the families of the *shahid*.

Volunteers work together with paid personnel to look after the families of the *shahids*. The result is the infiltration of the Foundation into the lives of these families and the dominion of these volunteers and salaried officials of society. The Foundation is based on the establishment of official

<sup>30</sup> The salary in any of the Hizbullah social foundation is between 600-800us\$, while in any governmental institution, it never exceeds 500us\$.

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relationships and the web of authority that dictates the relationships between every member of society. For instance, if the widow of a *shahid* decides to remarry, she would tell her "sister" from the *Taakhy* Project. The volunteer would relay the information to her superior, the *muta'hidin* responsible for the quarter, and the *muta'hidin* would report it to the delegate of the Social Institute. The information is channelled through the Foundation's structure. It reaches the top officials in less than one week. If any of these high level officials disagree with the proposed act, the widow is advised not to go forward with her plans. If she refuses, she is requested to take no action and then threatened and punished if she still fails to comply.

Indeed, as long as the Foundation restricts its function to the services it aims to provide to the families of the *Shahid*, then its rape of the privacy of the lives of every member of its society could be overlooked. It is when it uses its channel and structure to reward and punish society members that its dominion becomes manipulative and contradicts the purpose of the social service foundation.

### **3. Problems the social service foundation poses to the movance of Hizbullah**

#### **A. Reach of Foundation and its services**

Analyse the reach of one of the foundations of Hizbullah that propelled it into the elections. Hizbullah has relied on the services of its social service foundations to establish its popularity and promote its name. It also has used

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its authority on the social matrix to wield a stick and carrot policy.

### 1. Establish a pro-Hizbullah social matrix

The *Shahid Foundation* aim is to establish within society a cure for its pain. The Hizbullah society endures daily injuries from its enemies. The purpose of this Foundation is to develop in society the intrinsic skills of healing from within. In this lies the secret of its strength. "Once our goal is attained, our society will be unbeatable."<sup>31</sup>

In the Hizbullah repertoire of political and social thought, the body social is maintained over two axis. The first is the co-operation between the different parts of the body that perform different functions. The second is the hierarchy superimposed upon this order and lying on a bed of divine tributes. Hence, it is natural that the maintenance of this body social be likened to the maintenance of the human body. This analogy is rooted in the Islamic mind as an exclusive Islamic belief. God created the human body in such a perfect way that a deep feeling of the divine emanates from our understanding of the body's function. Therefore, the body social also should be patterned after the perfect model of the human body.

Once the body social functions like the human body, it becomes as invincible, as homogeneous and as strong as its model. For instance, when the human body is injured, it mobilises all its cells to heal the pain from within, no matter

<sup>31</sup> I quote Hajj Shami in one of the many interviews I had with him.

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the width or the depth of the injury. If the body social adopts the same strategy, it would be as great as God's creation of an entity. This parallel between the human body, which God created in his image, and the social body is in the Hizbullah thought entrenched in the Islamic faith.

Such analogy is similar to the Sanskrit associations made available in a 9th century Zoroastrian text. In this case, the human body is likened to the four-fold division of society into castes, starting with the head (priests), descending to the belly, (husbandsmen), the hands (warriors) and the feet (artisans).<sup>32</sup> A somatic analogy is alternatively conceived: The body regulated by its central point, the heart, which overseas the functional hierarchy and co-operation amongst the other organs and ensures the maintenance of life within the organism.

Yet, the heart (as is its corresponding element in the body social) is the decisive organ. This much is always indicated in the extended use of the somatic analogy: The heart is the first organ to be formed in the embryo. Its primacy is always underlined not only for purposes of embryological information but also to indicate that its existence is the pre-condition for the existence of the other organs.<sup>33</sup>

In this analogy, the heart, as conceived in the body politic, is identified with the king. The body social identifies

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Aziz al Azme, in 'Muslim Kingship', p119.

<sup>33</sup> Aziz al Azme, 'Muslim Kingship', *The Absolutist Imperative*, pp115-153.

the co-operation and interdependence between the organs. The core of arguments regarding the supremacy of the king and his regulatory and supervisory roles rests on long argued debates. Kingship and the debates that surround it existed long before Islam. The likening of the body social to the human body and the king to its heart is one of the main justifying arguments to monarch friendly thinkers. These debates did not erode with Islam. The analogies were only developed by Muslim thinkers in order to justify the existence of a king such as *Ibn Khaldun* and *Ismaili* thinkers.

Yet, it is not specific to them neither as Muslims nor as Hizbullah: Islam clearly was innovative in this analogy. However, what is specific to Hizbullah is its interpretation of the analogy between the body social and the human body. The Hizbullah thought undermines the role of the heart and the king and wonders about the existence of a body politic separate from the body social. It also emphasises the existence of the hands, the warriors.

In the Hizbullah analogy, the human body is a model of hierarchy and interdependence. Yet, there is no distinction between the body politic and the body social. The heart is equated to the *faqih*, which regulates and observes that the organs correctly function. He stands at the summit of the body social and is not away from it in the body politic. The hands are distinguished from the other organs, as are the warriors in the body social. They are the roots of sensibility, the main tools of the body to protect itself from foreign danger and to attack perceived threats.

Therefore, the purpose of the analogy drawn between the human body and the body social in Hizbullah thought is to emphasise the role of the hands, which correspond to the warriors. Since the co-operation between the organs ensure its strength, the power of the warriors is also rooted in the degree of support provided by the rest of the body social. The base of this analogy is anchored on the Islamic precept that the human body was created by God in his image. Hence, it not only establishes the body social idea on divine grounds but it also derives the belief in the idea from an act of faith. Therefore, it becomes an Islamic duty to support these warriors.

When a warrior falls, the body social is injured. Hence, it is the duty of the body social to concentrate on healing the affliction. Thus the support and privilege given to the warrior's family, in essence replacing one warrior with others and ensuring that the loss is not irremediable. This would guarantee the body social's endurance against its enemies just as the human body fights against bacteria and viruses.

Therefore, the *Shahada* candidate is the most important component in Hizbullah's body social. He features on one of the axis of the body social. The other is the heart. The axis intercept, forming a pyramidal shape, which is headed by the *faqih*. The warriors are the engine of the structure. The essence of the life of such a structure is the interdependence of the organs of this body social, secured by the social foundations.

This analogy, promoted by Hizbullah, has opened many doors to Hizbullah leaders. Indeed, it has allowed the

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entrenchment of the foundations (in this case, the *Shahid Foundation*) into the body social in the form of establishing interdependence between its organs. This has been so successful that nowadays, the heart is notified of all that occurs in the feet, the arms, the belly or head of the body social. Thus, those at the top of Hizbullah's pyramidal hierarchy are aware of what occurs to the warriors, the husbandry, the priests, and the artisans. The body social appears to be functioning even better than the human body. Furthermore, as this analogy is believed to stem from Islamic beliefs, it is endowed with the divine and imposes its rules on each of the components of the body social in the form of duties. Hence, it is the duty of each entity to obey and work with the foundations in order to increase the co-operation and enhance the interdependence chain between the organs of the body.

The *Shahid Foundation* is one of the foundations that feature this sense of co-operation and interdependence. Its task is justified by the above analogy. Consequently, this demands an implicit degree of honesty and obedience from those who function within its realms, for as they are aware, their task is part of a bigger aim. Moreover, this foundation merges the efforts of all of the organs of the body social in order to support the warriors. In conclusion, the foundation of the *Shahid* forms the basis of Hizbullah's social matrix. It defines the hierarchy within, such as the structure of its foundations, which in essence reflects the structure of the entire body social.

The danger of such an institutionalisation of the body social lies in its assets. The Foundation aims to teach society to

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heal from its injuries. It achieves this aim by providing for the families of the *shahid* in a way that makes them feel privileged, thus ensuring the replacement of the *shahid*. The Foundation's establishment in society has allowed it to manipulate and control its members. The result is that just as it can provide the services and meet the needs of these families, i.e. the carrot, it can also use the stick to reinforce its will. Since it is anchored in the body social and its base is the entire social matrix, its manipulative feature gives it the power to punish as well as reward any entity or individual.

### B. Omnipresence

The *Shahid Foundation* constitutes the social matrix and defines the relationships between its entities. While the former sections have been dedicated to identifying its structure and hierarchy paths, the following will be devoted to analysing the consequences of such an institutionalisation of authority.

The structure's most distinguishing feature is the interdependence between the players involved. They overlap in such a way that it is very difficult to identify the members of the Foundation from the families of the *shahid*. For instance, most of the area delegates are directly related to a *shahid*. He is a son, a brother or a father. Most of the "sisters" attending to the *Taakhy* Project are themselves wives of *shahid*. In sum, most of the "staff" of the Foundation is *shahid* family members that work within its structure and hierarchy to support other *shahid* families. To be more specific, 90% of all those who live in *Dahhyat* are related to at least one *shahid*. Hence, every time a sample was taken of the *Shahid Foundation* working in the

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*Dahhyat*, there was a 90% chance the workers all were related to a *shahid*.

A look at the *Dahhyat* quarter finds that nearly every family has experienced the fall of at least one *shahid*. Moreover, at least one of its young men is *amujahed* and hence a candidate to *Shahada*. Additionally, every family has affiliations with the *Shahid Foundation*, either salaried or volunteers. Thus, it is only logical to deduce that this Foundation has a presence in every family in the *Dahhyat* for nearly every member of the society belongs to it. This truth ingrains the Foundation in society. Both society and the *Shahid Foundation* depend on the same resource: the people inhabiting the Hizbullah fiefdom. Their relation is defined such as the Foundation institutionalises the contribution of every individual to the *Jihad* and *Shahada*. In sum, the foundation is omnipresent in the lives of every family inhabiting the Hizbullah fiefdoms.

### **1. Stick and carrot policy**

The structure of the *Shahid Foundation* is constituted from the social matrix made from the population of the Hizbullah. It aims to help it help itself. The institutionalisation of the relationship regulates the hierarchy between each and every entity and formalises the genuineness of the help provided. The duty of the Muslim is to support *Jihad* and thus the *Shahada*. Yet, because of the institutionalisation of the foundation, the men reinforce the religious obligations as they account to society, even before they account to God. When one does not fulfil his duty, he is punished in this life before even

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reaching the afterlife. On the other hand, he can also be rewarded.

Indeed, the omnipresence of the *Shahid Foundation* in the lives of every family in the Hizbullah body social provides its institutions with the power to reward and punish its members. While at first, the Foundation serviced all those inhabiting the Hizbullah fiefdoms, with no reservations, it then opted to serve only those it felt deserved its support. It is essential to note that at this stage, the foundation didn't exclude the Christian villages of its services. In the beginning, many Christian families inhabiting these areas were considered as families of the *muquawamat*. Although the Christians were often victims of passive *Shahada*, they were encouraged to send their youths to the front and become active *muquawamat*. Hence, they became families of *shahid* incorporated in the Foundation realms and the Hizbullah body social, just like any other family.

Once entrenched in the lives of the body social, the Foundation was given the authority to determine which families are privileged and courageous and which are treacherous. The latter was deprived of the Foundation's services and excluded from Hizbullah's body social. If the family is living in Hizbullah's fiefdom, this becomes a problem. Instead of being treated in a privileged manner, those deemed to be "treacherous" are ostracised. Moreover, when the only source of income, the father or son, of the family fell in *Shahada*, material deprivation of the Foundation services is a punishment that no one wants to experience.

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The "stick and carrot" policy has become a common strategy used on the body social. In the case of the *Shahid Foundation*, the carrot represents the services provided to the family of the *shahid*. In exchange, it asks for the family's allegiance. The stick is the family's deprivation of moral and financial support.

The stick is applied to families who belong to the body social but who do not provide to its hegemony. They are described as traitors and abusers and are condemned from the body social. Such families are accused of failing in their Islamic duties, neglecting Hizbullah's need for obedience and honesty and guilty of abusing Hizbullah's trust. The last accusation was especially levied during the years when Hizbullah participated in the election battle.

2. The institutions of the Foundation and Hizbullah's electoral success

a. Muslim imperative. "It is a Muslim imperative to move from one task to the other."<sup>34</sup> It is therefore the duty of the *Shahid Foundation* to support the Hizbullah in its tasks. The Parliamentary elections are not an exception. In 1992 and 1996, the *Shahid Foundation* mobilised all its resources to support the Hizbullah. It also provided its institutionalisation of the body social to serve the electoral machine of Hizbullah.

The electoral machine has the same pyramidal structure as Hizbullah and the *Shahid Foundation*. It is composed of the

<sup>34</sup> Quote from Hajj Shami speech in one of the interviews I had with him.

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same members, salaried workers and volunteers that worked in the electoral machine of Hizbullah. Each performs with the same authority, honesty and obedience he provides to the *Shahid Foundation*.

The structure of the Foundation has therefore propelled Hizbullah into Parliament. Yet, it is not only the institutionalisation of authority (by the Foundation) in the body social that gained the Hizbullah candidates the votes of the entire social matrix. Other factors also are involved.

The *Shahid Foundation* has been meeting the needs of the families of the *shahid* since before Hizbullah ran in the elections. Hence, these services had established Hizbullah's popularity in the social matrix. Indeed, while the above sections elaborated at length about the types and aims of the Foundation's projects, not much emphasis was placed on the positive effect these services had on Hizbullah. The health clinics, hospitals, *Taakhy*, *Takaful* and education centres all served the people first but also ingrained Hizbullah in their lives. Furthermore, it spread the Hizbullah allegiance. The support Hizbullah candidates garnered in the elections is indicative of Hizbullah's wide reach.

The *Shahid Foundation's* services promoted Hizbullah's popularity. Its institutions are at the root of its electoral machine. More importantly, both together have established Hizbullah dominion over the body social in its fiefdoms. This dominion ensured that the body social would cast its ballot for Hizbullah because failure to do so would be noted and punished.

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In the 1992 and 1996 elections, the stick was applied to those who did not vote for Hizbullah: These families were immediately excluded from the services provided by the *Shahid Foundation* and ostracised. They were displaced from the status of the privileged families of *shahid* to the status of traitors and ingrates. Ironically, it was the delegates, who were tasked to oversee the honesty of the voting process, who turned in the identities of these families.

The Lebanese electoral system enables the delegates of the candidates standing at the ballot boxes to recognise which families did or did not support their candidate. On election day, depending on the size of the families living in the electoral district, a number of ballot boxes are distributed. Every candidate running for a seat in an electoral district has the right to designate one or two delegates to stand over each ballot box. The delegate holds a census list containing the names and birth dates of every eligible voter. All voters registered as having been born in the same place appear on the same census list and cast their votes in the same ballot box. The result is that, at the end of the day, every member of the same family casts his vote in the same ballot box. Thus, when the ballot delegates count the votes from each ballot box, they soon discover who did or did not support Hizbullah candidates.

These delegates are members of Hizbullah's electoral machine and established members in the *Shahid Foundation*. Therefore, upon learning of the treachery of one of the families, its punishment was swift. This feature reinforces the Hizbullah popularity and emphasises the reach of the *Shahid Foundation*.

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It not only promoted Hizbullah in the elections but also established a feedback process that ensures the dominion of the electorate votes and the behaviour of its members.

Therefore, if a family benefiting from Foundation support is found to be guilty of not supporting a Hizbullah candidate, measures are immediately taken against the family.

### C. The cult of the martyr

'Therefore let those fight in the way of Allah, who sell his world's life for the hereafter, and whoever fights in the way of Allah, then be he slain or be he victorious, we shall grant him a mighty reward'. (*Surrat al-Nisaa*, 74, the *Koran*).

The *Shahid Foundation* glorifies death in *Jihad* as it has established the cult of the martyr within the body social. The *Jihad* has been its purpose since the day the Foundation was established. An examination of the Hizbullah society allows us to gauge its success. The above sections have cited the wills of the martyrs, often scribbled on paper shortly before they went to face death. Implicit through their readings, the message provided is clear: the *shahids* are fully competent, skilled, intelligent beings. The consequences of their deaths on their families have been so well contained by the work of the Foundation that even their wives wish that, if necessary, their husbands die on the battlefield. Their children's ambition is to become a *shahid*, and their families hold a privilege place (one many envy) in society.

The *Takaful* magazine spreads promises of the afterlife

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to reassure the families that their beloved is better off where he is: "The *shahid* is a human who has reached the pinnacle of humanity." The quotations may be based on the teachings of Khomeini, "Fight through *Shahada* because *Shahada* is the essence of history." (Al Faquih) or entrenched in verses from the Koran like the one cited above.

The *Shahid Foundation* also uses the historical example of the Hussein martyrdom. In fact, Hussein's sacrifice in the face of tyranny has become a metaphor for the Shiites in general. He is the Prince of the *shahids* and has often been affiliated with Shiite upheavals all over the world. To understand the predisposition to sacrifice and the *Shahada*, one must examine the example set by Imam Hussein and his followers in Kerbala. Hussein exemplified the belief anchored in the popular conscience: Martyrdom constitutes a victory over death.

The *Shahid Foundation* has been able to entrench in the Hizbullah society a certain cult of the martyr where the spiritual, the symbolic and the morals of the population are mobilised to compensate against the technological superiority of the Israeli enemy. It has rooted the strength of the Islamic resistance in "a cultural realm constituted in Islam which founds its general scheme".<sup>35</sup>

The social belief in the Foundation is certainly an indicator of its success. Yet, there also is the Israeli retaliation,

<sup>35</sup> Hassan al Amine, 'The culture of resistance in the South', *El Mawkif*, n.21, Beirut, Feb. 1985.

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which indicates Hizbullah's power. Indeed, the Israeli daily newspaper, *Maariv*, has labelled the "Israeli" security zone in Southern Lebanon as the "insecurity zone".<sup>36</sup> The Islamic Resistance has transformed the occupation zone into a Vietnam from where Israel wants out. Increasing pressures are being applied on the government from the mothers of Israeli soldiers. Public opinion supports them. Israeli demonstrators chant: "We have no business in the south of Lebanon."

### 1. Definition of the problem posed by the Foundation

However, it is because of the *Shahid Foundation's* success that it is experiencing a dilemma. It is a social services foundation, which has established an anchor for political military activity, martyrdom, or *Shahada*. Yet, when we examine the services it provides, the *Shahid Foundation* is a charity institution. Nonetheless, its work is concentrated to pillar *Jihad*, also known to the public as "terrorism", and aims to support the *shahids*, accused of leading the famous "suicide missions". Yet, in order for this Foundation to follow the Hizbullah movance, it must reconcile its two contradictory features.

This will not be the object of this chapter, which only seeks to expose the dilemma the Foundation faces: A social welfare program that aims to legitimise, strengthen and support a military activity. Until 1992, the date of Hizbullah's entry into Parliament, this foundation had no real obstacle to overcome. But after 1992, it has played a vital role in the propulsion of

<sup>36</sup> *Maariv*, 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1996.



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Hizbullah into the elections. Its institution has anchored a strong, hierarchic electoral machine that dominates the body social and guarantees feedback that reinforces the hegemony of Hizbullah over its electorate. Its services have established Hizbullah popularity in its fiefdom.

This Foundation has not only been able to adapt to the changes of the Hizbullah in the Lebanese political scheme but has been able to support them. Yet, if there is a peace process that Hizbullah accepts, will the dilemma it currently faces pose an unbridgeable gap that will handicap its reason for existence? Will this Foundation that has been the source of wind beneath Hizbullah's wings be the source of its restriction?

We have seen that the *Shahid Foundation* altered its name shortly after its establishment. Hence, from the "revolutionary *Shahid Foundation*" or "*Al Shahid Al Thawarawi*" in 1982 to simply *Al Shahid* in 1988. When it dropped its revolutionary title, it received a license from the Lebanese State and a legitimisation of its "welfare" programs. This change marked the Foundation's first adaptation (to serve Hizbullah) to the change of context in the Lebanese scene.

As the Foundation built hospitals and education centres, it promoted the popularity of the Hizbullah and entrenched itself in the body social. It also managed to claim its independence from the Iranian "revolutionary *Shahid*" ministry when the projects it launched was able to support itself. This nuance has enabled the Foundation to pave Hizbullah's entrance into Parliament. Hence, underlining its independence from its parent marked the second step in the Foundation's

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evolution and adaptation to the changes in Hizbullah.

Moreover, when the Foundation supported Hizbullah in the electoral battle, its institutions laid the ground for the Hizbullah electoral machine. This helped in the process of the "Lebanonisation" of Hizbullah. But before that it had to "Lebanonise" itself, meaning it had to further distance itself from its ties to Iran. Lebanese flags were placed next to Hizbullah flags at the Foundation's head offices, and the Iranian clergy, who usually head the summit of the Foundation, were sent back.

2. A reconciliation between *Jihad* and the social foundation

Since then, the Lebanese government has considered the Foundation to be a social welfare institution established by Hizbullah to help the Islamic resistance. It has legitimised and accepted the Foundation. The Chief of State has even been quoted supporting the "resistance" to Israel and the institutions that enhance it.

Yet, when peace reigns over the area, what will happen to this Foundation? Its name will no longer have any significance, as there will be no more *Shahada*. Its existence will have no meaning, as there will be no resistance, no injuries to protect society from and no need to help it heal from the inside. The dilemma facing the Foundation is reaching its peak.

When there is no more *Jihad* in the South of Lebanon, can the Foundation restrict its label and program to a welfare project or will it be overtaken by the contextual changes in the

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Lebanese scene? Will the same institutions and foundations that promoted the Hizbullah movance create a wall to further evolution? Furthermore, will this wall lead to the Foundation and ultimately Hizbullah's demise?

## **THE JIHAD AL BINA FOUNDATION**

### ***1. Jihad al Bina Foundation***

#### **A. Origin**

*Jihad al Bina* was founded in the mid-eighties, a time when the Lebanese civil war had created large numbers of homeless Shiites. Hizbullah statistics estimated that Shiite farmers<sup>37</sup> consisted of more than 60% of the nation's "poor". The Foundation received its license to operate in September 1988. On the license, *Jihad al Bina* was identified as a Hizbullah organisation.

The Foundation's headquarter is situated in the suburb of Beirut (Haret Hrek, Rolex Bldg.), commonly known as *Dahhyat*. Its other offices are spread throughout the Hizbullah fiefdom including the *Rowais al Radoof* area in Beirut, *Rass al Ayn* in the Bequaa, *Mashgara-al Bayadin* in the Western Bequaa, and the *Al Saraia* area in Nabatya.

#### **B. Aim and purpose**

The Foundation's primary purpose is to provide a better quality of life to those living in what the State has identified as

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<sup>37</sup> "Shira" magazine, 1996. Article on the achievements of the Hizbullah, Vol. 31.

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the "doomed areas" or "misery belts", the zones most subject to Israeli shelling. Hizbullah refers to them as the forgotten and neglected areas. They include the Bequaa, South Lebanon and the *Dahhyat* in the Beirut suburbs. *Jihad al Bina*'s primary task is to install the infrastructure needed to provide electricity and water supply.

It dug wells, built water tanks, and implemented water networks, irrigation canals and sanitary servers throughout the "doomed area". Furthermore, it built electrical networks and installed generators, providing power to the most remote villages.

The Foundation, which pledged to increase the area's literacy rate, set up schools and cultural centres to combat ignorance, a cause of continued poverty. Specifically, it launched training programs to teach farmers how to use modern equipment to farm their lands. Once applied, the educational programs enhanced production and income levels. We note that, at present, the money received for the crops grown is the only source of income received by 89% of all farmers living in Hizbullah territory.

*Jihad al Bina* also is working to curb the exodus of farmers from rural areas to the capital. To halt the migration of villagers, whose homes were destroyed during an Israeli attack, the Foundation immediately rebuilt the devastated houses. The act provided an immediate cure to the problem, reduced the number of squatters, and helped residents overcome their fears.

## *The Jihad Al Bina Foundation*

### C. Composition

*"Together we resist, together we build."*<sup>38</sup>

As is indicated by its motto, *Jihad al Bina* is a foundation by the people for the people, specifically the Hizbullah social matrix. The *Jihad al Bina Foundation* mainly recruits engineers and social workers to important and envied salaried positions. Relative to the average pay in Lebanon, these recruits are paid well. For instance, an engineer who gets \$800 at a private company receives \$1,500 from the Foundation.<sup>39</sup> The recruits also are envied because their task is rewarded in the afterlife. As they are tasked with improving the quality of life of the less privileged, their work is endowed with a unique Islamic feature for which the person is judged in the afterlife.

### D. Structure

*Jihad al Bina* is characterised by its well-defined structure in which each member has a clear job description. The organisational set up, detailed later, was provided by the Foundation manager during a 1996 interview. The graph, which outlines the organisational hierarchy, was extracted from the Foundation's prospectus.<sup>40</sup> However, information received

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<sup>38</sup> *Jihad al Bina* prospectus.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with *Jihad al Bina* manager, July 1996.

<sup>40</sup> *Jihad al Bina* has many prospectuses.

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from many informants and not found in the Foundation's documents also will be incorporated, even though it may distort the official figures.

As in other Hizbullah structures, the Foundation's hierarchical structure is set up in pyramid form.<sup>41</sup> It goes as follows: The Foundation's general manager, who is selected by the Hizbullah politburo, is responsible for the entire operation. He is based in *Dahhyat*. His job is to ensure that things run smoothly. He also oversees the workings of the group's regional outlets in Nabatya, Bequaa, and West Bequaa.

Below him are the agriculture administration, electricity and water administration, central administrative bureau, reconstruction administration, and technical administration. A certain number of engineers (three-25) attend to each section.

The next level comprises the departments that make up the different administrations. For instance, the agriculture administration has three divisions: agricultural advising, agriculture production, and animal production. Part - time or full-time volunteers staff the departments. The directors, on the other hand, are salaried members, specialists in the area they are responsible for.

Yet, there is more to the Foundation's success than its structure and organisational hierarchy. Mottoes and slogans also are used to reinforce organisational authority and enhance

<sup>41</sup> We have previously described the structure of another foundation, *Al Shahid*. Moreover, we detailed the structure of the Hizbullah electoral machine. All are organised in a pyramidal hierarchy.

## The Jihad Al Bina Foundation

Hizbullah's performance.

### E. Ideology

*Jihad al Bina's* ideology is encapsulated in the symbolism attached to the figures of a hand, leaf, arch and (beehive shaped) frame, which are incorporated into the design of its flag. The hand symbolises the farmers' main tool. Without the hand, which also connotes the union of the people around Islam, the farmer cannot plant seeds or cultivate fruits.

The leaf symbolises progress and evolution, both purposes of *Jihad al Bina*. Its seven splits hint to the seven leaves of the Prophet Joseph. This story is mentioned in the Koran and thus has a divine connotation. So does the arch, which represents the oldest construction form. The arch is found throughout Islamic construction and is symbolic of innovation and realisation. The frame is a simple beehive. The bee is a fitting model because of its discipline, organisation and willingness to sacrifice for the group. The divine significance attached to these earthy symbols elevates them to another level. All in all, the Foundation's flag is one that can be respected and admired by every Muslim.

The Foundation's ideology revolves around co-operation and self dependence. We note that it only follows the core route of the Hizbullah foundations as both axis feature the ideology of the *Shahid Foundation* among others. To explain briefly, for the subject has been previously discussed in an earlier chapter, Hizbullah equates a well functioning society to the good health of the human body. If a disease attacks a part of

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the body, the white blood cells unite in battle against the intruder to rid the body of the disease. This is a reflex against the invasion of a foreign agent. Hizbullah draws an analogy between the body's anti-virus mechanism and society's struggle against its enemies. Just like cells, every individual has to fight in order to help society battle its enemy. In fact, it is a Muslim's duty to unite and co-operate with other members of society to help it cure itself from the inside, just like the human body. This process establishes self dependence.

Hizbullah's ideology is reinforced by its mottoes and its purpose is "intensified" with a certain degree of "Holiness". These mottoes can be extracted from the Koran on *Jihad* for instance. There will be no translation of them in this section. Alternatively, they could be simple quotes from Ayatollah Khomeini, his speeches or comments on the foundation of *Jihad al Bina*. "Thanks to Allah, the achievements and efforts of *Jihad al Bina* fills the hearts of the being with happiness. ..."

However, up until now nothing sheds light on the Foundation's performance, a subject to be examined later. Maybe to best understand the operation is to follow the money.

### E. Operation.

#### 1. The money trail

Without cash, *Jihad al Bina* would be building and reconstructing castles in the sand. Yet, while there is no question that the cash exists, it's not clear where money is coming from.

## *The Jihad Al Bina Foundation*

Sources from the Foundation indicate that it comes from a variety of donors. Yet every answer given is different and sometimes conflicts with previous ones. However, if we restrict our comparison to the answers given in two prospectuses issued by the Foundation, the discrepancies are even more obvious. This issue will be interpreted and analysed more thoroughly in the last part of the study. At this stage, we will cite more examples of the difference between the two prospectuses.

The first is written in Arabic and dates back to 1992. The other is written in English and published in 1996. The former cites the "Islamic Republic of Iran" as the main money donor with additional funding received from the *Qhums*<sup>42</sup>, the people's subventions, and charities. The latter document, however, states that the money comes from its members, charitable donations and government aid.

The Arabic version emphasises the group's ties to Iran. The English prospectus denies it. The gap in time between the publication of both pamphlets may be one reason for the discrepancy. Another is concern that not all supporters would welcome the news. Arab readers would be more enthusiastic about the Foundation's close ties with Iran than their English reading brethren.

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<sup>42</sup> Every Shiite Muslim ought to pay one fifth of his income to the *Sayyid* who donates it to the foundations.

## 2. Projects and Accomplishments

After eight years of work (1988-1996), the *Jihad al Bina Foundation* has been able to improve the quality of life of many, especially those living in the doomed and forgotten areas. This guarantees the well being of the *Jihad* society and increases its immunity against the enemy. (CF ideology of *Jihad al Bina*)

To evaluate these achievements, we will first identify and describe them. For purposes of clarity, the work will be grouped according to their nature, i.e. education, health, electricity and water projects.

### A. Education

The Foundation's first goal was to increase the cultural and educational development of Shiites living in Hizbullah territory. In Lebanon, education, even public schools, is costly. In poor rural areas, it is common to hear tales of parents withdrawing their children from school because the family cannot afford the schooling fees. Moreover, the children are needed in the fields. Thus the rise of the Lebanese adage, "the more children you have, the more wealthy you are." Traditionally, youngsters are obliged to earn their keep. For instance, a family with 10 children has the equivalent of 10 employees working free of charge.

Amongst the consequence of such traditions is the very low literacy rate found in poor agriculture areas, places where Hizbullah fiefdoms are concentrated. Several villages lack schools or other educational facilities. As a result, families who

want to educate their children must send them to nearby towns or cities.

*Jihad al Bina* is rehabilitating and building schools in the most remote villages and towns. However, the State prohibited the Foundation from offering free education. So instead, the Foundation provides "better quality" education for less money. In the Foundation schools, the children learn the Islamic values at a very young age and benefit from a number of extracurricular activities.

## **CONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION OF SCHOOLS**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Constructed</b>	<b>Rehabilitated</b>	<b>Under Construction</b>
Beirut	1	5	1
Bequaa	3	15	0
South	5	4	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1</b>

### ***Hizbullah***

#### **CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND EDUCATION CENTRES**

Region	Facilities
Beirut	3
Bequaa	2
South	1
Byblos	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>

#### **B. Reconstruction**

To avoid the discontent of villagers whose houses was destroyed during Israeli reprisals against Hizbullah attacks, *Jihad al Bina* immediately rebuilds the structures, at no cost to the person. This helps the community "cure itself from the **inside**" and clamps down on haemorrhaging that would weaken the **society** and harm the *Jihad*.

The result: 15,000 institutions have been reconstructed throughout Lebanon, ranging from ports and hospitals to industrial and commercial institutions. According to statistics issued by *Jihad al Bina*, 13,200 institutions were reconstructed in the South, 1,500 in the Bequaa and 300 in Beirut.

#### **C. Health care**

Prior to *Jihad al Bina's* construction of hospitals and clinics (1998-present) in the zones most subject to Israeli shelling, the area had no health facilities. That meant that anyone who was injured or sick had little recourse. They either tolerated the pain

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or, if they had enough money, would make their way to the nearest city for medical help.

#### **ESTABLISHMENT OF HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CENTRES**

Region	Hospitals & Health Centres	Popular Clinics	Rehabilitated Health Centres
Bequaa	2	2	0
North	0	2	0
South	2	1	1
Beirut	2	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>

#### **D. Religious centres**

*Jihad al Bina* rehabilitated and built two types of religious centres: mosques and monuments (sculptures to its founder Ayatollah Khomeini). The Foundation gives priority to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of mosques, especially as it reinforces the Islamic ideals.

#### **RELIGIOUS CENTRES CONSTRUCTED**

	Bequaa	South	Beirut
Mosques	9	10	10
Monuments	1	0	0

## ***Hizbullah***

### **E. Water projects**

The Foundation was able to supply water to the smallest and most remote villages, some of which cannot be found on the map. It provides both potable water and water for irrigation. For instance, potable water was supplied to residents of *Lebayya* and *Sohmur* in the Western Bequaa, areas that have no running water. In order to carry out its mission, the Foundation installed pipes, dug wells and built water stations. It dug artesian wells in poorer regions where villagers had to buy and transport their water from afar. More than 25 wells (15 in the South) have been installed throughout Lebanon.

In 1989, in *Dahhyat* (Beirut suburbs), *Jihad al Bina* built and filled more than 100 water tanks. This project now distributes potable water to the more than 500,000 inhabitants of the area. Moreover, the Foundation's water committee has been able to maintain the distribution networks and canals in Beirut and the rural region.

### **F. Electricity**

This section of the Foundation installed power stations to regions that never before had electricity. For example, 23 stations were built and electricity wires and stabilisers were fitted in the Bequaa. Specialised engineers monitored the implementation of these projects.

### **G. Agriculture**

"Sixty percent of the Lebanese population depends on

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agriculture as their main source of living."<sup>43</sup> This makes the government's neglect of the sector even more negligible. The nation's climate and water resources make it suitable for developing many kinds of plantation. *Jihad al Bina* aims to fill the gap and enhance the country's agricultural prosperity. The services it provides can be divided as follows:

- Agricultural extensions
- Animal production and protection
- Plant production and protection

Between 1988 and 1995, *Jihad al Bina's* accomplishments include the establishment of:

- Agriculture centres. The group provides the pesticides, fertilisers and agricultural materials farmers need at "reasonable prices". As of 1996, the group established seven agricultural centres, the newest of which was opened in Qana, a village in South Lebanon that Israel bombed in April 1996. The centres are distributed in such a way as to meet the needs of the Bequaa and the South.

- Veterinary centres. Two veterinary centres were constructed in Nabatya (South) and Sohmur (Western Bequaa). They meet the needs of the 40 villages that surround them.

- Agricultural nursery. The nursery was installed in Sohmur.

- Agricultural advisers. Engineers working for

<sup>43</sup> *Jihad al Bina* prospectus on agriculture. CF appendix.



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*Jihad al Bina* meet with farmers to inform them about the latest farming techniques and newest farm equipment. These visits are made as frequently as needed.

- Irrigation canals and agriculture routes. In order to help farmers cultivate their fields, *Jihad al Bina* developed a network of roads and irrigation canals. For instance, in addition to implementing new water networks, 15 canals and 12 irrigation canals were established. Similarly, eight agricultural roads and three irrigation canals were established in the South.

- Agriculture extension services. *Jihad al Bina* established several training programs and seminars to give farmers the skills they need to help themselves. The extension services was launched in 1992 after the government ordered farmers to cease cultivation of the "prohibited plantation" (hemp and poppy plants). In order to prevent farmers from starving, *Jihad al Bina* launched programs to help the farmers find alternatives to what, until then, had been their only source of income. The Foundation replaced hemp and poppy fields with potatoes and offered technical programs in electrical installation, tile work, sanitary fixtures and carpentry. They also offered "other training programs held outside the country, which lasted for six months". In 1996, 35 agriculture seminars were organised, using the latest audio-visual materials. These sessions, which usually last 7-10 days, drew large groups of farmers. The 1996 gathering in Bint Jbeil attracted 1,500.

H. Transition: Relationship of Hizbullah's social service foundations and the Lebanese State

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The Foundation's relationship with the State was once characterised as one of friction and tension. The discord springs from the fact that Hizbullah believes it is doing the government's job and deserves gratitude. The State, on the other hand, resented the group's growing popularity and tried to curb the services provided. As stated earlier, the State made it difficult for the group to establish free educational facilities in remote areas. It perceived the group's Islamic curriculum as a threat to its own.

The State's resentment may stem from the sense of being "replaced" in the affections of the people. After all, it was *Jihad al Bina*, not the State, which supplied needed services to a lot of places. We remember the response of a *zaim* (leader), a former member of Parliament, who was running for reelection in 1992. In response to a rural villager's request for electricity, the candidate responded that the person had never had this service so why should he want it now? Needless to say, the candidate was not re-elected.

Several observers also were alarmed at *Jihad al Bina's* growing popularity, which they felt was achieved at the expense of the State. A few even wondered if Hizbullah was planning to build a "state within a state"?<sup>44</sup> Did Hizbullah want to topple the Lebanese State to establish an Islamic State? The question will be further discussed in the next section.

At this stage, we note that many of the above concerns

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<sup>44</sup> W. Sharara, "*Hizbullah, State within a State*".

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were extinguished when Hizbullah garnered seats in Parliament in 1992. But it was not until summer 1996, when the Minister of Agriculture attended *Jihad al Bina's* yearly exhibition in Tyre, that hostility between the parties ceased. His presence at the event marked the turning point in the relationship between the Foundation and the State.

### 3. Impact of Jihad al Bina

#### A. Increase Hizbullah popularity

During the nation's civil war, the militias battled for inches<sup>45</sup> in order to attain hegemony over the various factions in the community. Skirmishes and killings marked the battle for territory as did the establishment of "green lines".<sup>46</sup> In the post-war era, the battle for turf metamorphosed into a race for popularity. Warlords became politicians who adopted the reverse of their usual Machiavellian policy of "better to be feared than loved".

To gain popularity and establish territoriality,<sup>47</sup> the warlords established social service foundations. Hizbullah was among the pioneers of this "movement". *Jihad al Bina* was one of the social service foundations Hizbullah established to meet

<sup>45</sup> Harris, "*There is Life after Death, Lebanon*".

<sup>46</sup> The capital, Beirut, was sectioned according to the militias' hegemony. Green lines, guarded by snipers from both groups, separated them.

<sup>47</sup> Hegemony over territory.

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the needs of inhabitants of the "doomed areas". In exchange for improving their quality of life, *Jihad al Bina* asked residents to pledge their allegiance to Hizbullah. The favours and support received reinforced Hizbullah's popularity and established its territoriality. It also expanded Hizbullah's hegemony and popularity beyond its territory.

Thus observers affirm that "the social welfare of Hizbullah increased the membership of the party".<sup>48</sup> They acknowledged that *Jihad al Bina* has had a huge impact on the Shiites.<sup>49</sup>

Indeed, a quick look at the organisation finds that the group employs more than fifty engineers, supplies electricity and water to more than half of those living in *Dahhyat*, educates the children of the "misery belt"<sup>50</sup> and provides health insurance to nearly all residents of the "doomed areas".<sup>51</sup> So it's not surprising that *Jihad al Bina* has propelled Hizbullah's popularity above its intra-community rival Amal.

#### 1. Amal vs. Hizbullah: intra-community race for popularity

The post-war rivalry between Amal and Hizbullah to

<sup>48</sup> Hamzet, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 14, "*Hizbullah from Islamic Revolution to Participatory Accommodation*".

<sup>49</sup> Harik, "*The Social Services of Lebanese Militias*", p.27.

<sup>50</sup> "Misery belt" and "doomed area" are the labels placed on the very poor rural areas populated by the Shiite community and subjected to Israeli shelling. It refers to the *Dahhyat*, the Bequaa and the South.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

establish hegemony over the Shiite community was defined as a "war of expansion".<sup>52</sup>

The *Dahhyat* for instance, although characterised by a 100% Shiite population, emerged from the war a divided area - Hizbullah's fiefdom on the left, Amal's lands on the right. During the war, green lines separated the two. After the war, Hizbullah's social service foundations accomplished what the skirmishes did not: It established Hizbullah's expansion and infiltration into the Amal section of the *Dahhyat*. While Amal also had established a social service foundation, its capacity and capabilities are embryonic when compared to *Jihad al Bina*.

The outcome of the 1992 election at which Hizbullah scored a landslide victory over its rival substantiates this finding. Hizbullah garnered eight Parliamentary seats to Amal's four. Voter support for Hizbullah was again displayed in the 1996 election.

## 2. State vs. Hizbullah: Inter-community rivalry for popularity.

The State has for a long time been considered an inter-community rival to Hizbullah. The rivalry is rooted in Hizbullah's fight against the idea of a state controlled by the Maronite community. This has led to several run-ins with the State army. However, Hizbullah's entry into the government in the post-war era seems to indicate that this "rivalry" between Hizbullah and the State may have been exaggerated.

<sup>52</sup> Harris, "*There is Life after Death: Lebanon*".

Others disagree. Indeed, Waddah Sharara notes that Hizbullah's social service foundations are "parallel institutions to those of the State" and "only by their existence are a threat to its authority".<sup>53</sup> The author argues that the existence of these foundations indicate Hizbullah's plans to build a "state within a state". Its development and expansion signifies Hizbullah's desire to be the victor in the participants' race for inter-community hegemony. The battle lines: The State wants to establish the Maronite hegemony over Lebanon. Hizbullah wants to replace the Lebanese State with an Islamic State.

Sharara ignores the fact that the State licensed and partially funds Hizbullah's social welfare foundations, which offer services that jettisoned Hizbullah into the political arena, locally and nationally.

One ought to note, however, that Sharara's conspiracy theory may not be completely unfounded. The influence Hizbullah wields is such that its followers can easily be swayed into doing what the leadership wants. A survey indicates that the allegiance of those living in Hizbullah territory is first to Hizbullah and then to the government.<sup>54</sup>

The question then arises, what would happen if Hizbullah should change its purpose?

<sup>53</sup> W. Sharara, "*State Within a State*".

<sup>54</sup> Results of a questionnaire done to determine people's first allegiance: the State, Hizbullah and the Republic of Iran. Of 100 surveys randomly distributed in the *Dahhyat* and the South, 95 ranked Hizbullah before the State.

Hizbullah's popularity is at the grassroots level. It is strengthened by an Islamic identity, which makes competition of either a laic or Maronite State uneven in Hizbullah fiefdoms where the mosques and *husseynyat* are used to entrench territoriality and affirm popularity. Such action has led outside observers like Hala Jaber to note that "Hizbullah's mission is to indoctrinate the public."<sup>55</sup> Indeed, an indicator of the group's popularity may be the density of the crowd that come to Hizbullah built mosques for Friday prayer.

However, the facts point toward a change in the Hizbullah movement. It no longer is an outside entity struggling against the State. It is an accepted opponent in the political arena. "We have entered the Parliament in order to make ourselves heard from within."<sup>56</sup>

## B. Territoriality gain

### 1. Election strategy: Stick and carrot

There is no question that *Jihad al Bina* has established Hizbullah's popularity against its rivals. The results of the 1992 and 1996 elections have positively supported this hypothesis. This section will examine the method used to expand Hizbullah's influence and will try to determine if the votes cast was done from gratitude or from fear. In summary, does the Foundation abuse its power to compel support for Hizbullah?

<sup>55</sup> Hala Jaber, "*Born with a Vengeance, Hizbullah*", p. 166.

<sup>56</sup> Sheikh Naim Kassem, Vice Secretary of Hizbullah and its second highest ranking member, 1996 interview.

Jaber, author of the book "*Born with a Vengeance, Hizbullah*", doesn't believe so. She argues that Hizbullah and its Islamic Resistance are so popular that nothing was needed to expand its territoriality. According to her, "the Hizbullah does not need to exhort to such tactics."<sup>57</sup> She states, "It is wrongly believed by Westerners and many Lebanese observers that it is a condition to adhere to the Islamic resistance in order to benefit from Hizbullah's social services."<sup>58</sup>

Jaber argues that it is the power of the mobilisation of the Islamic resistance slogan, *muqawammat*,<sup>59</sup> not gratitude that had people cast their ballots for Hizbullah. She believes that those who benefit from the services provided are not required to support Hizbullah.

The following information, however, should cast doubts on this argument. During the elections, Hizbullah "ballot delegates" held two responsibilities: to monitor the polls to deter "voter cheating" and to examine the census lists.<sup>60</sup>

However, for those living in the "doomed" areas such as the *Dahhyat* or any of the southern villages, which are subject

<sup>57</sup> Hala Jaber, "*Born with a Vengeance, Hizbullah*" p.160.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.161.

<sup>59</sup> Hizbullah only used the "*muqawammat*" slogan in its 1996 election campaign. This point was elaborated on in the chapter on the election process.

<sup>60</sup> These terms and the whole process were explained in earlier studies.

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to almost daily shelling or air strikes, medical care in the past was simply absent. No hospitals or clinics existed until the creation of the Health Institute. In 1988, the Institute opened the *Rasoul al-A'zam Hospital* on the birthday of the prophet - hence its name. "This hospital was built in response to the positions, ballot delegates — as permitted by the electoral system — had access to information indicating which voters did or did not support Hizbullah. (This subject was discussed in earlier sections.)

The ballot delegates gave the Foundation a list of names of voters who benefited from the services it provides but did not cast their ballots for Hizbullah candidates. In turn, the Foundation excluded these families from its programs and the families became social outcasts. So, while it is not explicitly stated, it is understood that the failure to support the party would lead to the termination of benefits provided by *Jihad al Bina*.

However, Jaber is correct in one respect: "A priori" one does not need to support Hizbullah to benefit from the Foundation's services. However, once the person is a recipient of these services, "a posteriori" gratitude is the least the Foundation expects. For example, *Jihad al Bina* does not restrict its work to the Shiite community. It has— on the "a posteriori" condition — provided its services to residents in Christian villages.

Hizbullah does not hide the fact that it uses the stick and carrot tactic. Yet its expectations from those who benefit from its services alters depending on its policies and aims. For

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instance, prior to elections being again held in 1992 (no elections were held during the civil war), Hizbullah demanded that all program beneficiaries abide by the Islamic way of life.

When the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran embraced the creation of *Jihad al Bina*, he blessed it as a "means of spreading Islam amongst the Lebanese"<sup>61</sup> and trusted that the care provided would "embrace the oppressed in the hope of leading them to Islam".<sup>62</sup>

While the Foundation's main purpose still is to reinforce the Islamic way of life with Iran as its example, this isn't its current priority. However, program beneficiaries still must abide by the Foundation's purpose and adhere to the Islamic ways. This meant wearing of the *tchador*, attending Friday sermon at the mosque, growing a certain type of beard that identifies the men as Hizbullah and rejecting music, especially western music. The Foundation used the stick and carrot tactic to enforce the Islamic way of life. Those who conformed to the Foundation's expectations are rewarded. Those who don't are deprived of the services it provides.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> The hard cover of the prospectus of the Foundation features the picture of Ayatollah Khomeini. The inside cover quotes his letter about the Foundation.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> This was observed in the field and substantiated by reports several informants provided during my fieldwork.

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### **2. Is Hizbullah more feared than loved?**

It appears that with the establishment of its social service foundations, Hizbullah has changed its tactics. It no longer uses physical force to "bend" people to its will. Yet the carrot and stick method reinforces the belief that Hizbullah still rules by fear, not "love".

Because residents of the Hizbullah fiefdoms have no choice but to vote for Hizbullah candidates if they want to continue receiving the services provided by *Jihad al Bina*, the ballots cast did not necessarily indicate the people's "liking" for the party. This casts doubt that the results of the 1992 and 1996 elections are true indicators of Hizbullah's popularity.

The essays written by the children, which reflect the rise of a pro-Hizbullah generation, are a better indicator. Nearly every teen in this community dreams of becoming a doctor, engineer, or a *shahid* (martyr). The Islamic focus of Hizbullah schools and educational centres has developed the solid social matrix on which Hizbullah rests. For Jaber,<sup>64</sup> it is the exposure to Islamic education that makes the Hizbullah so "seductive to young people".

It is through its educational programs that the Foundation is spreading Hizbullah's influence. Many alarmed observers point to the "manipulative tactics of Hizbullah being strategically implemented through the programs of the social welfare foundations". They fear the curriculum is being used to

<sup>64</sup> H. Jaber, "*Born with a Vengeance, Hizbullah.*"

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indoctrinate the nation's youth.

Hizbullah officials counter that these charges are levied to "distort the images of these charities". They say it is a "Muslim imperative to help the less fortunate and give aid to the destitute". They add that charitable work is being done and that those who claim otherwise are "evil". Hizbullah contends that its foundations provide services to all those in need. "This builds a stronger society, immune to the enemy's evil," says the Foundation manager.

Those living in Hizbullah territory react positively to the grants and services provided by the Foundation. They are not coerced into showing gratitude for they have been taught to love the Hizbullah. This establishment of a homogeneous social matrix guarantees Hizbullah's supremacy over its fiefdom, the "doomed areas", and spreads its influence into the sections controlled by its rivals.

### **4. Will the pillar of the Hizbullah movement become a future hindrance?**

#### **A. Discrepancies between public image and reality**

##### **1. Self dependence vs. close ties to Iran**

*Jihad al Bina* projects an image of what it describes as "self dependence" as indicated by its mottoes, slogans, and purposes.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> CF previous section for further details on this foundation aims, purposes, and ideologies.

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Despite its clear public administration and set hierarchy, the Foundation seems to project a false "self dependence"<sup>66</sup> from its mother institution, Iran. After all, it was Khomeini who blessed the establishment of *Jihad al Bina* in Lebanon and Khomeini who said the group's mission is to "embrace the oppressed" and "to lead them to Islam". Iranian clergy were sent to Lebanon during the late 1980s. They launched the Foundation, directed and managed its offices, trained the Lebanese Hizbullah in its welfare programs and set up its headquarters. The Iranian clergy left Lebanon shortly before Hizbullah entered the electoral battle in 1992.<sup>67</sup>

Although the Iranian influence appears to be less predominant after the clergy left, the ties between the two entities have not been severed. Photos of Khomeini still hang in every office in the Foundation, an omnipresent mother that no child would go against. *Jihad al Bina*, when holding agriculture training courses, sends the farmers to Iran to learn about modern methods of farming.<sup>68</sup> There also is at least one reference that Iran supplies money used to cover the Foundation's expenses. These concrete examples of the ties between the two cannot be hidden, especially as it is well noted

<sup>66</sup> Term used in *Jihad al Bina's* English prospectus.

<sup>67</sup> Historical facts reported by several Hizbullah informants and confirmed by the Lebanese secret services.

<sup>68</sup> Further details about these training can be found in the above sections.

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that Khomeini himself blessed its institution.<sup>69</sup>

The reality of this relationship calls into question the "self dependency" image the Foundation projects. There may be one way of reconciling the differing images but the margin depends on the elasticity of the borders of this seeming independence. It is as follows: In Hizbullah terminology, self dependence is seen as the "entire Islamic society". After all, Hizbullah's real purpose is to help the Islamic society cure itself from the inside without relying on foreign help,<sup>70</sup> identified as "the help of the *Hizb al Shaytan*" (Party of Evil) or non-believers. However, self dependence is not the same as independence from Iran and its aid. This scenario seemingly conciliates the two images.

However, the discrepancy between image and reality is again reinforced by the differences found between the Arabic and English versions of the group's prospectus. The failure to reference the Foundation's ties to Iran appears to lend credence to the thought that, in order to forge ahead, it must project an image that conflicts with its reality.

### 2. Funding source: Claims differ between English and Arabic prospectuses

While the English prospectus fails to mention *Jihad al*

<sup>69</sup> These statements have been supported and proven in the above sections.

<sup>70</sup> CF *Shahid* chapter where this notion has been elaborated at length.

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*Bina's* ties to Iran, the Arabic version does not. In fact, it proudly acknowledges it. The Arabic version describes Khomeini as the father of the Foundation and emphasises Iran's sponsorship of the group.

The time gap between the publishing of both prospectuses could explain the incongruity. The Arabic version dates back to 1994, a time when Hizbullah and its foundations were still uncertain of their "Lebanonisation" status. Although Hizbullah held seats in Parliament, when it came to politics, Hizbullah still was relatively inexperienced. Few were convinced of a lasting Lebanonisation future for Hizbullah. During these uncertain times, the Foundation's ties to Iran may have been viewed as a plus, as a source of stability and strength.

The English version was released in 1996, at a time when Hizbullah was preparing to enter the electoral battle for the second time. This was when its "*Islamic Jihad*" slogan metamorphosed into the national *muqawammah* slogan, one tailored to appeal to a broad base of supporters. At the time, the Foundation's ties to Iran may have been seen more as a deterrent than a source of public appeal. Thus the Foundation's decision to leave the information out.

The change in Hizbullah's paradigms (1992-1996) compelled the *Jihad al Bina Foundation* to adapt. Yet, in doing so, the Foundation has had to project an image that sometimes conflicts with its reality. It's a fact that the Foundation was born of an Iranian mother. It once proudly displayed its links to Khomeini, its founding father. It also is true that one could

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observe the Foundation's growth and development until it affirmed its "self dependence". However, the Foundation did not mature enough to affirm its independence from Iran. Thus the contention that the image — shifted to focus more attention to the Foundation's charitable works — projected is not a "true" one.

3. A shift in focus from Holy struggle as indicated by the *Jihad* to charitable deeds. Does the Foundation risk losing its legitimacy if it loses the focus of its reality?

*Jihad al Bina implies a state of war.* (Waddah Sharara).

The core of the ideology and purposes orienting *Jihad al Bina* are summarised in its name, which translates into the English as "holy struggle of construction". And while the two terms -- *Jihad* (holy struggle) and *Bina* (construction) -- may seemingly conflict, in reality they don't.

In "*Hamas and Hizbullah*", Jean Pelletiere elaborates further on the Shiite understanding of the term *Jihad*.<sup>71</sup> He defines it as "a way of empowering oneself". He contends that the rule of violence is the essence of *Jihad*. It is the source of power. Therefore, to attain power in any field, *Jihad* imposes itself on every Muslim.

An examination of the Shiite's notion of *Jihad* would, however, deny the connotation of violence that Pelletiere associates with the term. It is the duty of every

<sup>71</sup> Jean Pelletiere, "*Hamas and Hizbullah*", p.4.



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Muslim to lead a certain *Jihad*. The doctor, the writer, the student, the pharmacist, the architect and even the housewife are considered *mujahedeen* or "soldiers of Islam".<sup>72</sup> They lead a holy struggle in their development of society. There is no violence intrinsic in the notion. Keeping this in mind, the engineers working for *Jihad al Bina* are considered to be *mujahedeen*. Their constructions are a feature of *Jihad*. Viewed in this light, the apparent contradiction in the title seems to wither away.

There is a notion of the divine endowed in the *Jihad*, which elevates it to the level of an Islamic duty. It involves a perpetual, though not necessarily violent, struggle between Muslims and non-Muslims. However, in the Hizbullah thought, the word is dichotomous. There is the "Hizbullah" or the party of God and the Party of Evil, which denotes the entire non-Muslim world. Thus it becomes the duty of every Hizbullah member to be part of *Jihad* until Islam reigns.

The issue that *Jihad al Bina* currently faces is the dichotomy between the truth of its reality and the social charity image it projects. The key difference is that charities devoted to helping the poor offer their services to anyone, no matter what their religion, background or political affiliation. It asks nothing in return. This is not true of *Jihad al Bina*, which while it extends its services to non-Muslim zones, implicitly expects the recipients of its services to support Hizbullah in the polls.

<sup>72</sup> Not the book written after this title.

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The question is: Can the Foundation exist without the *Jihad* notion, which it once used to mobilise the Shiite community around a purpose that helped them believe in their ability to change the world? Added to the mix is the fact that the reason for "hiding" the *Jihad* essence is to garner voter support.

Already, some observers have noted that the conflict between the image and the reality has created rifts.

### B. Other interpretations

#### 1. "A facade for broader aims?"

Sharara for instance claims that *Jihad al Bina* implies a "state of war". It only exists to rebuild the damages the enemy inflicts on Hizbullah. This state of war is a prerequisite for the existence of such a foundation, a requirement that cannot be reconciled with the group's current image of a charitable foundation.

Sharara in "*State Within a State*" argues that the Hizbullah social service foundations are a major part of a conspiracy theory. The discrepancies between their image and their reality are indicators of the Machiavellian Hizbullah plan. To Sharara, the "state of war" is implied in the group's name. Thus, he believes, "It only exists to rebuild the damages of war, without it, Jihad al Bina has no reason for existing."<sup>73</sup>

<sup>73</sup> August 1997 interview with Waddah Sharara, just after the publication of "*State Within a State*".



In his work, Sharara outlines Hizbullah's "conspiracy theory" to topple the State and replace it with an Islamic state. Hizbullah's charitable foundations, he believes, are part of the coup d'etat strategy. "This is their reality and purpose," argues Sharara. "Their image of social charity is only a dish used in this particular menu to suit the Hizbullah political taste of the day. Even the electoral battle is a facade for broader aim."

To support his hypothesis, Sharara points to the competition between the State's and Hizbullah's social welfare programs. Nonetheless, he appears to forget that the state licensed *Jihad al Bina* and several others. Moreover, the State and the Hizbullah social service foundations have been co-operating and co-ordinating with one another since 1992.

For instance, the two collaborated on agricultural seminars held in 1992. In 1996, the Minister of Agriculture displayed his support of the program by attending *Jihad al Bina's* exhibit in Tyre. His presence indicated the reality of a joint project and further programs between the government and the Hizbullah foundation of *Jihad al Bina*.<sup>74</sup>

However, Sharara correctly tackles the "war" essence encapsulated in the Foundation's name. Still unanswered is what will happen to the Foundation when *Jihad* is no longer wanted or needed. For example, if Israel withdraws and Hizbullah is not needed to fight for Lebanon's lands, will it continue the *Jihad* until Jerusalem is liberated? In this case, would the State want this fight to take place within its borders?

<sup>74</sup> According to the interpretations of the newspapers in general. (CF *Al Safir*, Aug. 26, 1996).

Will the part of the group intrinsically linked to the term be able to adapt to further Hizbullah movance if it decides to de-link from the fighting essence of *Jihad*?

2. "Hizbullah emerged intact from its changes of paradigm."

After Hizbullah's success in the electoral race, the general observation was that the move had left Hizbullah "intact". In this case, I quote May Chartouny. "It is furthermore the social welfare foundations, which have provided the necessary structure and scheme for Hizbullah's entrance into the government."

The *Jihad al Bina* and *Al Shahid* foundations were at the root of Hizbullah's change of paradigm. They provided the adequate structure and institutionalisation of hierarchy and channels of communication that allowed for a successful transition.

To do so, the foundations first had to adapt themselves to the change in paradigm. They had to train their salaried employees to abide by governmental laws and rules, encourage beneficiaries to participate as citizens and educate them on their right to vote. The beneficiary and benefactor metamorphosed into the electoral machine and electorate. Thus skilful strategies were used to gather and guarantee votes.

Thus, it is by thoroughly examining the foundations, after they adapted to the change, that one can deduce whether Hizbullah emerged as intact as Chartouny perceives. A quick glance indicates it has. However, yet to be determined is if further changes are made, could a foundation named *Jihad al Bina* survive the illegitimacy of the *Jihad*? Would its structure

and institutionalisation, once a pillar to Hizbullah's movance constitute an obstacle to further change? In short, would the same institution that once served Hizbullah's Lebanonisation lead to its destruction?

3. "Splits within the Hizbullah were on the verge from the beginning."

Nizar Hamzet predicted the division of the Hizbullah as a result of its movance since 1993.<sup>75</sup> He argues that, despite the emergence of Hizbullah in 1996, a radical movement shook its homogeneity and divided its ranks.

The dissent was lead by Sheikh Subhi Al Tufeili, former secretary general of the Hizbullah (until 1992). He was a fervent opponent of the entry of the Hizbullah into the electoral battle and hence into the government. For further elaboration, one should refer to the conference that happened in Iran in 1991 between the Hizbullah Shura Council and the Iranian leadership.

Sheikh Tufeili surfaced in 1996, after the implementation of a Parliamentary resolution that effectively terminated the culture of drugs and its proliferation in the Bequaa. Hizbullah deputies were among those who ratified the resolution.

Throughout the nation's civil war, residents of the Bequaa Valley produced hemp and poppy, used to make hashish and heroin respectively. The inhabitants of this valley (mostly Shiite) became experts in its growth and cultivation. It

<sup>75</sup> N. Hamzet, *Third World Quarterly*, 1993, vol. 14, "Hizbullah from Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation".

was their bread and butter.

In 1996, the government, with Hizbullah representatives its midst, burned the drug fields. Yet they provided no alternatives to the farmers, who were left with nothing to replace their once lucrative crops.

Sheik Tufeili voiced the farmers frustration, openly criticising and accusing the government of "starving the Shiite farmers"<sup>76</sup>. In his accusations, Tufeili grouped Hizbullah government representatives with all members of Parliament.

However, *Jihad al Bina*, which had perceived the difficulties to the farmers, had organised a series of seminars — 35 were held in 1996 — to teach farmers to grow potatoes. The Foundation provided the seeds needed to start planting and the technical and material support needed to succeed. At least 1,500 farmers attended the Bint Jbeil seminar, a prime example of an instance where a Hizbullah foundation supported and operated within the governmental scheme.

But, the farmers were not satisfied. They could not understand why the potato was to replace two very lucrative crops. They also could not understand the Hizbullah's silence and acquiescence to the government's decision. It did not help that potato prices dropped that year because of the flood of potatoes to the market. Many farmers nearly starved, and their trust in the Foundation disintegrated. A spectre of anger, against Hizbullah representatives in government in specific and Parliament and the army in general, shadowed the Hizbullah

<sup>76</sup> His speeches are quoted in almost all of the newspapers of the time. Summer 1996. (*Al Nahar*, *Al Safir*).

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fiefdom.

Sheikh Tufeili led the protest, which resulted in insurrections and violent armed rallies. The result: friction with the army. The rallies mainly consisted of Hizbullah members led by high ranked party officers. Yet, the Hizbullah leadership and Shura council spoke out against the farmers' anger. The State and Hizbullah outlawed Sheikh Tufeili and his followers. The group was banished to Bridal, Tufeili's hometown.

Thus Hizbullah was not "intact" as many suggested. Indeed, it is a fact that Tufeili had divided the Hizbullah, and, although the division was not fatal, it weakened the Hizbullah's public image and structure in the Bequaa, especially in Bridal.

Such a split could be the precursor of several others as it connotes to the usual division of an Islamists movement. Most are torn between a radical pressure and a more evolutionary one. The Muslim brothers' movement in Egypt for instance is among the most famous Islamists who have suffered from such a split. In the particular case of Lebanon, recall that Hizbullah was born from such tension: It was the radical movement that diverged from Amal in 1982.

In conclusion, the tension resulting from the discrepancies between the reality of the social service foundations and its current image has resulted in splits within Hizbullah. At issue is whether the social service foundations, which propelled Hizbullah into the political arena, can resolve the conflicts and adapt to any movance or if the tension will lead to collapse of the foundations and Hizbullah.